

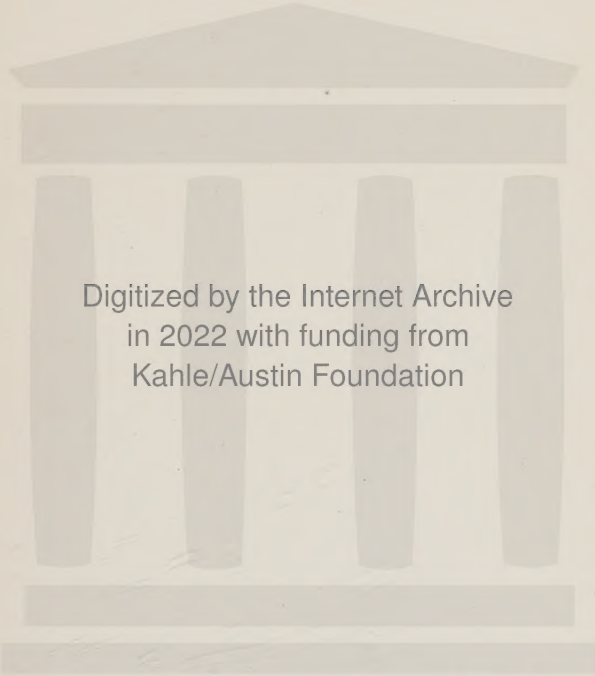
Sons
of
the
Covenant

GORDON

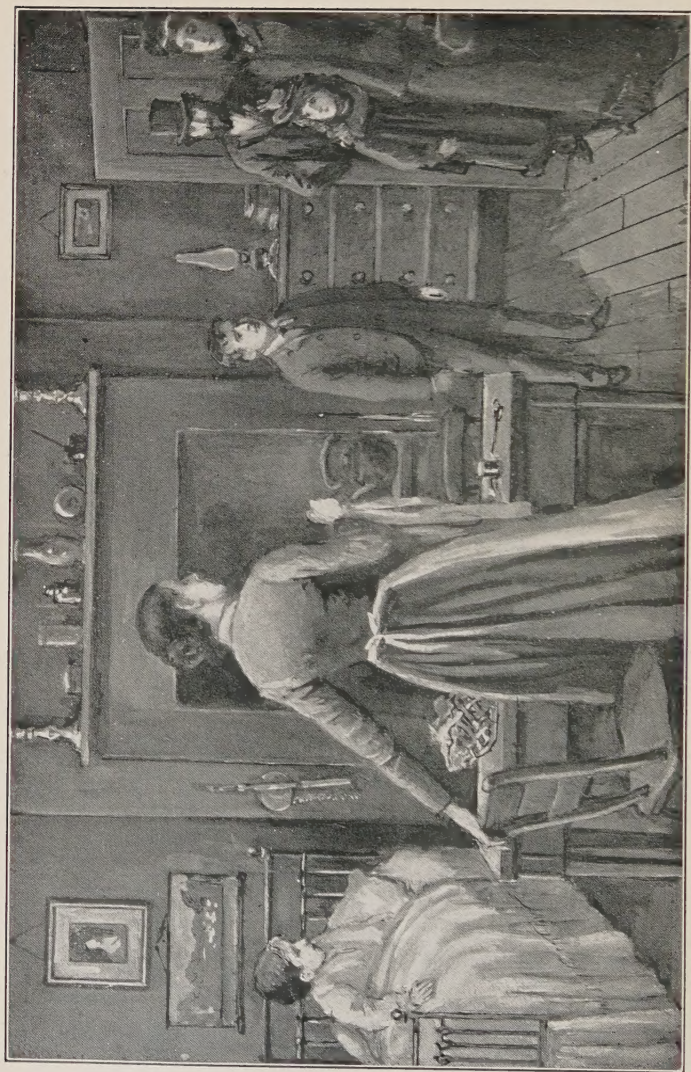


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Sons of the Covenant



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THE PAID INVESTIGATOR INVITED HIS TWO COMPANIONS TO ENTER. (See page 26.)

Sons of the Covenant

A Tale of London Jewry

BY

SAMUEL GORDON

Author of "LESSER DESTINIES,"
ETC., ETC.



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PART I

CHAPTER I

"DIAMOND," said his wife.

"What's up now?" came the grudging answer from over the top of a newspaper.

"I want you to do a little something for me."

"You and your little somethings—just the proper thing for a man after twelve hours' work down at the Deptford Meat Market, killing seventeen bullocks. . . ."

Mr. Diamond was a "ritual slaughterer," whose office it is to make beef, mutton, or veal out of live cattle for his coreligionists' consumption, in accordance with Mosaic traditional precept.

"Seventeen bullocks? Well, nobody's going to make you the eighteenth; so you needn't bellow like that," broke in Mrs. Diamond with her Thursday-morning voice.

"I ain't bellowing, Becky, my dear," remonstrated Mr. Diamond, who had allowed himself by a rapt perusal of an interesting libel case to forget who his interlocutor was.

Mrs. Diamond, it was notorious, possessed three sizes of voice. Size number one she reserved exclusively for the wife of the local M. P., a coreligionist, with whom she came into contact at election times, and whom she had inveigled into the belief that Mr.

Diamond was a man of influence in the constituency. Size number two she employed in speaking to ordinary people—her husband included. The third size, the one referred to above as her Thursday-morning voice, stood her in good stead while battling with extortionate fishmongers for her Sabbath fish; but she also made it serve her on occasions when things were not going entirely her way, especially with Mr. Diamond; and then Mr. Diamond answered with humility—that is, if he answered at all.

"Why can't you do a thing without first arguing about it?" continued Mrs. Diamond, somewhat mollified. "Don't I do enough for you? I wonder what sort of a reputation you'd have, if I didn't use all my spare time going round to people and telling them you're the best husband in the world? And they believe me, don't you make a mistake; I don't leave off talking till they do. Wish I could believe it myself."

"Wish you could, Becky, my dear," echoed Mr. Diamond, piously.

"Shocking, the way you put yourself out to make me—eh?" And Mrs. Diamond exhaled irony from every pore. "Diamond, I know what you're after. You want to make yourself precious. You want to show me—fling it down my throat, even if I choke over it—what a treasure it is for a woman that never had no schooling herself to have a man to do her a bit of writing at times—if he wants to, that is. Don't you fear; I can see your little game. One of these days you think I'll talk myself dead begging a favor from you, and then perhaps you won't mind writing something to be put on my tombstone. . . ."

"But I'll write it this instant, Becky, my dear."

"What, the tombstone?"

"How can you be so stupid?—the letter, of course. Quick, I'm ready."

Mr. Diamond had hastily extracted a sheet of note-paper from the table-drawer, and sat, his pen as it were cocked like a trigger, ready for the word of command. But the torrent of dictation which, judging from past experience, he expected to deluge him was not forthcoming. Instead, Mrs. Diamond seemed possessed by a strange hesitation.

"I wish you wouldn't be so sharp—you've quite flustered me," she observed, glaringly inconsistent.

"Take your time, my dear; I know how hard it is to start a letter properly."

"Who said it was a letter?" asked Mrs. Diamond.

"You did, didn't you?"

"Of course you always know better what I mean than I do myself."

"Becky, my dear, you haven't made up any poetry, have you?"

"Poetry? Stuff! Diamond, listen to me: I want you to commit a forgery."

Here Mr. Diamond ought to have exclaimed, "My prophetic soul," but unfortunately he was not acquainted with the quotation, which was a pity. It would have been such a nice way of expressing the little thrills of vague apprehension at the circumlocutory fashion in which his wife had preferred her request—a fashion varying so signally from all precedent. But if he could not cap the situation with any apt quotation, he did something similar: he got up and fitted his hat on his head.

"Why! where are you off to?" exclaimed Mrs. Diamond.

"To the police station," replied Mr. Diamond calmly. "You ask me to commit a forgery; that means the thing is as good as done. I may as well start doing my ten years as soon as possible."

Mrs. Diamond sat silent, awed by her husband's loyalty to the laws of his country or by the patent tribute to her domestic ascendancy—she did not exactly know which. To solve her indecision she got into a temper.

"What a hurry he's in to make me out a piece of God-help-us! There's an opinion to have of your wife that's worried and fretted and slaved alongside of you twenty-seven years come next Passover. Now out with it—what d'you think I'm more of, a rogue or a fool? You won't say—I dare say you won't; you know when you're well off. Forgery—prison—Becky Diamond. To heaven I want to bring you, and you won't let me!"

"I do want to let you, but not just yet," replied her husband, who, of course, had no intention whatever of gratuitously delivering himself over to justice, but was fain to utilize the incident as an excuse for stepping across the way to take a hand in a "friendly game."

Mrs. Diamond listened in vain for the least little tinge of flippancy in his reply. But Mr. Diamond's luck held good that day, and his wife conjectured from his "not just yet" a reverent reluctance to part with this life, which could only be construed into an indirect compliment to her. Thus appeased, she came at once to the business in hand, wherein a square printed form she submitted to him apparently was to take a leading part.

"Fill that in," she dictated.

"Board of Guardians for the Relief of the Jewish Poor," read Mr. Diamond. "First Application."

"Who's applying? As you say it's to be a forgery, it can't be myself."

Mrs. Diamond bit dead a sarcastic comment on his powers of inference.

"No, not yourself, it's Mrs. Lipcott," she replied instead.

"Mrs. Lipcott?" Mr. Diamond laid aside the pen. "Why doesn't she make her youngsters write it? They're through the sixth standard, or one of 'em is."

"Because she doesn't know anything about it; it's my own idea, and I am doing it on my own little hook. See?"

"Can't say I do. Don't think you've got the right to make people paupers behind their backs," answered Mr. Diamond quite resolutely.

"Better they should make corpses of themselves, eh? And that's what she'll do; on my blessed word, she'll wash herself dead before she's a year older. Perhaps you don't know she goes to bed with mustard plasters on her arms?"

"How should I? But even that doesn't explain why you should take this responsibility on yourself."

"Yes, it does," snapped Mrs. Diamond; "she's one of those stupid persons you've got to protect against themselves. She'll work and work and not once ask what the clock says. And what'll be the end? Another bed will be wanted at the Home for Incurables, and her two youngsters will be in the scramble for the orphan asylum, and there'll be more charity appeals, and more money'll be wanted, and—I wonder where

the community would be if there wasn't myself and one or two others to remember that 'a stitch in time saves nine.' Perhaps you've dawdled long enough now?"

"Oh, I'm quite ready, but—just a moment. Suppose you put the case like that to the woman herself?"

"Put it to her? I've rammed it down her throat."

"Well?"

"She shakes her head and smiles. If she'd at least answer me, and make a big fuss about wanting to be independent, and then go begging on the quiet! But she doesn't, she just smiles, and lets you guess anything you like. That's what I call pride peeping out through broken boot-tips. Who doesn't help herself from the Soup Kitchen during the winter? Mrs. Lipcott. Who doesn't go to the Thursday grocery distribution? The identical. Who doesn't let her children take the boots and corduroys that's to be had for the asking at the school? I needn't mention the name. That's the kind of creature she is, and—you'll make me choke, Diamond; haven't you started yet?"

"Why, I'm starting as fast as I can. Where's that Evening News? It's all right," he replied hastily. "I'm only looking for the date. Oh, by the way, how do you think the Board can help her?"

"By lending or giving her a few pounds to open a little all-sorts shop with. Then, as the boys grow up, they'll help her or get apprenticed to a trade, and she'll yet have a chance of knowing what it's like to have gray hairs on her head. It's a sensible plan, or it wouldn't be me that had thought of it. Diamond, will you or won't you?"

In genuine trepidation Mr. Diamond applied him-

self to his task. He called out the queries by which the applicant is catechized, and Mrs. Diamond supplied the requisite answers. As to her accuracy there could be no possible doubt, because she notoriously made it a duty to acquaint herself intimately with the life-histories of all who came into her personal cognizance. Cupboard skeletons she had made a specialty.

The details of information thus collected formed a tolerable biography of Mrs. Lipcott to date. From them it appeared that she was thirty-four years old, that she had been a widow for half a decade, that she had two male children aged thirteen and twelve respectively. There were also items concerning place of abode, occupation, genealogy, the last to the effect that she derived herself from foreign parents, and had immigrated at the age of four. It also transpired that she had no relatives living in London or, in fact, anywhere else.

Mrs. Diamond did not desist till she had the document read to her four times, and had seen it safely enveloped. It was to be posted first thing next morning. She generously consented to defray postage out of her housekeeping allowance. By that time it was ten o'clock. Desperately Mr. Diamond tried to summon up courage to ask for furlough to snatch an hour's transport from the hazard of the card-game across the way; but at the critical moment his heart failed him, and, as the nearest alternative, he went and smothered his chagrin under the bedclothes.

CHAPTER II

THRUST away somewhere amid the architectural tangle of the Spitalfields district is Narrow Alley. It bears a disconsolate, dumbfounded look, like that of a child which has lost its way among a crowd, and its score or so of hovel houses seem to be spending their time all day in manufacturing apologies for surviving. The top stories on either side sloped yearningly forward towards one another, and had the dwellings been but a little taller, the alley would have been a tunnel; as it was, the daylight managed to squeeze itself through the slit by dint of much exertion, which reduced it to the very shadow of itself.

Just at present that did not so much matter, because it was evening, the same evening, in fact, whereon Mrs. Lipcott's application for relief was being fabricated by the Diamond couple. The interior of Mrs. Lipcott's house in Narrow Alley, of which house she shared tenancy with an infinite number of other families, could not be said to disprove violently her fitness to rank as a recipient of charity. Its furniture was severely simple, with a leaning toward the antique and a desire to resolve itself once more into its constituent elements. But besides its decrepit chairs, beds, and table, the room contained healthier and more able-bodied effects in the shape of the two little boys figuring in the report as aged thirteen and twelve respectively. As far as the consumptive-looking lamp-light enabled one to be sure of one's impression, it



"AIN'T I PEELING AS HARD AS I CAN?"

appeared that these two little boys were engaged in preparing a meal. The angry crackle of seething oil tended to give color, as well as odor, to the conjecture.

"Hurry up there, Leuw," said Phil, the younger of the brothers, "mother'll be here presently."

"All right; ain't I peeling as hard as I can?" came the reply, somewhat gruffly. "Anybody would think it was my fault we started so late."

"I don't," asseverated Phil.

But Leuw would not be deprived of the right to exculpate himself in detail.

"Think I've been larking about all the two hours I've been away? I'd like to hear anybody say so. Hanging round the 'tater shop, that's what I've been, waiting for old Solomon to go indoors. He doesn't give us any tick, you know, the old miser. Well, at last he changes off with his missis, and you bet I took my chance quick enough. She lets me run up to a shilling now—used to be sixpence; getting up in the world, ain't we, Phil?"

"Looks like it," said Phil dubiously.

"Well, then, don't tell me to hurry up, when it ain't any fault of mine that things are a bit behindhand."

"But I never said . . ." protested Phil, blankly.

"Shut up! Who said you did? Think I've been 'pologizing to you for being late? Don't you believe it. Never seems to have entered your head, though I can't call it a fat head—but there are times when a fellow has got to make excuses to himself."

"Oh!" said Phil, beginning to catch his drift. "Now, if I hadn't got those 'taters, and there would have been nothin' for mother's supper, not to mention

yours, think it would have been any excuse for me that old Solomon wouldn't budge from the shop? Not a bit of it. Because something inside would have told me that I'm the—the—what's the word? Oh, yes, the responsible party, being the head of the family by right of being the oldest man in it, though I've got to let mother do the money earning till I've left school."

"And that will be in a fortnight," supplemented Phil.

"In a fortnight," echoed Leuw, with a certain grim emphasis.

"Are you sorry?" asked Phil, almost timidly.

"Not exactly sorry, but sort of—and you'll just keep it to yourself, do you hear?—sort of frightened like. It seems to me I'll have to do all my thinking for myself, 'stead of letting the teacher do it for me. It's enough to make one feel a bit anxious, isn't it, Phil?"

"Still, most people have got to start doing their thinking some time or other. I've done so myself already," replied Phil re-assuringly.

"Get away—I don't mean your kind of it, which is just dreaming with your eyes open. No dreaming for me, thank you. The way I'm going to do my thinking is to take hold of my brain with both hands, and worry it till I find out what the world's like, and what a fellow can get out of it, and how much he's got to give in exchange. That'll be a pretty hard day's work, what do you say?"

Phil gave him a puzzled look, and was very glad to find from Leuw's absent air that he was not really expected to express an opinion; and presently Leuw continued:

"No, I ain't sorry, and what concerns the funk, I haven't got it so very badly either. You know that door-knocker on the last house across the way? Well, when the moon shines on it, it looks like a grinning bogy, and I've got to go close up to it to know it's only a stupid old knocker. Strikes me in the same way the world looks a bit dangerous from a distance. I'll be all right once I'm close enough to look it in the face. And then I'm going to fight it."

"But you'll be very careful, Leuw, won't you," asked Phil apprehensively.

"I'll try not to hurt it," replied Leuw, jauntily, "because, mind you, I think I'm pretty tough. Do you know, Phil, I've been sort of feeling myself grow up for the last couple of years, though I didn't show it so much outside, because there's half a dozen chaps in the class what's got longer legs than me. Many a time I seem to myself a cheat and a humbug, knowing I had no business to go monkeying around the playground with a pack of kids. Thank God, I'll be able to feel more honest in a fortnight."

He paused and relapsed into a reverie, during which Phil bestowed his undivided attention on the potato chips in the saucepan, till Leuw finally voiced the conclusion which he had been driving at with the words: "No, it isn't at all nice."

"What isn't?" asked Phil, a little scared, thinking that the remark might apply to his cooking.

"Living on tick isn't. It doesn't do you any good; one-half of you feels choked and the other half starved, and you never know which way it's going to be the death of you. That's why I grew up in such a hurry, because I must start paying cash before it's got time to kill one of us."

"I don't like tick either," rejoined Phil thoughtfully, "but I wouldn't mind being a boy all my life."

"Oh, indeed, what for?"

"So that I needn't leave school."

"Yes, I've got that down on the list—with the other things."

"Hope the total won't come too big," said Phil anxiously.

"The bigger the better: I'll roll up my shirt sleeves a bit higher, that's all."

"Perhaps I could help you."

"Yes, by keeping out of the way. I'd have to waste half my time in seeing that nothing happens to you. You tackle the books, and I'll tackle the people. Books take some fighting, too."

"I know, but I'll roll up my shirt sleeves as well."

"Right you are, young 'un; you'll do. Hurray, only one more!" said Leuw as his knife uncoated the last of the potatoes. Just as he finished cutting it small, something seemed to happen, for he got up rather quickly, and looked searchingly about the room.

"What do you want?" asked Phil, following his gaze.

"Bit of rag—notched my finger, by way of a wind-up. Ah, here it is."

"Bleeding much—is it?"

"Buckets; the room will swim in a minute," joked Leuw.

"Hadn't you better hold it under the pump downstairs?" asked Phil, his anxiety only partially allayed.

"Good idea, that. Then I shan't want the rag, and mother needn't know," replied Leuw, hurrying off.

"Hold a minute, I'm coming with you."

"What? afraid to stop in the room alone?"

"Not that," faltered Phil, "but you see I'll be by myself with the chips, and you might think perhaps. . . ."

"Oh, might I?" said Leuw, breaking in on his embarrassment. "I 'spose that's a nice polite way of calling yourself brother to a blackguard and a greedy-guts. Take you long to think of it? Now, in the time you've kept me here jawing, you've wasted at least three drops of my precious—I've got a good mind to make you pay for them in chips."

Five minutes afterwards he was about to re-enter the doorway, but paused and waited for the slow-stepping woman of whom he had just caught sight at the mouth of the alley.

"Here, mother, I'll give you a lift," he said, taking her by the arm.

"Thank you, dear. Have you been to Solomon's?" asked Mrs. Lipcott.

"I have; it's all right."

"I'm glad, because Mrs. Daniels had no change and . . ."

"I knew it," said Leuw, bitterly, "she never has. 'Pay you to-morrow,' she said, didn't she? I wonder how many more houses her husband's been buying this week."

"Don't be unkind, Leuw; it was only a little thoughtless of her."

"That's right, whitewash her. Jingo, I'd make her think if . . ."

But what particular reflections Leuw wished to instil into the said Mrs. Daniels, and under what conditions he could have done so, remained unuttered,

because at this moment Phil opened the door to light them up the few remaining stairs. Eagerly he pulled his mother into the room, which presently resounded with vigorous kissing.

"Here, stop that," came a peremptory command from Leuw.

"Don't you care, mother; he's only jealous," laughed Phil disrespectfully.

"Perhaps—perhaps not; but what I am certain about is that you are keeping mother standing quite a minute longer than she need; and in the second place, it's time you started learning to keep your feelings a bit dark, and not give yourself away before everybody. It isn't safe with such a lot of bad people waiting round to take a rise out of you."

Phil looked to see how his mother was taking Leuw's homily on the necessity of cultivating emotional discipline. He himself felt quite incapable of answering him. For the voices that talked to him in his day-dreams he always had a pat and accurate reply; but before the voice of the world, which now spoke to him in the words of his brother Leuw, he cowered tongue-tied and helpless. How good it must feel to be strong and of ready speech like his brother Leuw! He must watch and learn the secret of it from him.

Mrs. Lipcott, too, had been thinking how to answer her son. Not infrequently was she thus at a loss. But that never troubled her. However much this boy of hers seemed a stranger to her at times, however much in him she had to guess at, her heart told her that, from the little that was revealed, she could safely take the rest on trust. And so she contented her-

self with saying: "Come, children, supper's getting cold."

Through the business-like silence which followed ran three trains of thought, all on more or less diverging lines.

Mrs. Lipcott wondered how her life would have shaped but for the cold which grew angry at being neglected, and worked itself up into the rapid lung trouble that carried her husband off. Perhaps she might have owned by now as much jewelry as Mrs. Daniels; the little boot-factory had just begun to make headway. As it was, her concern was not with precious stones, but with soap and stove polish, and if these were of superior quality, and saved her a proportionate amount of bodily wear and tear, she considered it enough good fortune for one day. She had not remained very long in the stupor wherewith she had been smitten by the downfall of her prop and stay. The cries of two healthy young appetites for bread had acted as an efficient restorative. But the energy to which they had roused her she felt at best to be only artificial, and gave no guarantee of reserve force. Of late she had more than once cast involuntary questioning looks at her future as personified in her two sons—especially the elder; and each time she had felt reassured, nay, elated and triumphant. For the things that make us happiest are the anxieties which carry their own comfortings for cargo.

Leuw, for his part, ate his supper with teeth that mutinied. The truculent mood of before had come back to him. As it was, it served as the keynote of his heart—this protest against the bleak sordidness, the cheese-rind paring, the rag-and-patch routine he

had to call life. He knew it required a certain amount of courage to protest, and he was proportionately proud of it. All the other people in Narrow Alley were afraid to put their burdens on the broad back of the future. They groaned along beneath them in apparent content. True, they did their fair share of grumbling, but it was only in a sort of hole-and-corner way; that is, they complained about the slackness of trade, about the low rate of wages, and the high price of bread and coal. But they never went to headquarters. They never, so to speak, put their grievances down black on white, and dropped them into Fate's letter-box, where they would have a fair chance of receiving consideration. On the contrary, they seemed afraid of drawing the attention of Providence to their existence, for fear of reminding it that their power of endurance had not yet been strained to its uttermost. That was what the pious called a godly resignation. Leuw believed in the godliness but not in the resignation. He had been created, and therefore had a right to live; or at least, he should not have been born with the knowledge that there were better things on earth, if it was never intended that he should enjoy them. No knock-kneed compromise for him. He had begun early to shake his fist at Fate. It was just as well that they both should know exactly how accounts stood between them; and that was—everything or nothing.

And little Phil, meantime, vaguely foreboding the disadvantage at which the dreamer of dreams is placed in the midst of a wide-awake world, was busily rehearsing to himself the first maxim of self-defense, which, according to brother Leuw, consisted in not giving way to your feelings before people.

CHAPTER III

IN those days the London headquarters of Jewish charity, the so-called Board of Guardians, did not yet consist of the palatial premises in which its many-sided and far-reaching operations are being carried on now. A commodious, unofficial-looking house, in a square at the northwest point of the Jewish area, served for that purpose, till the growth of its scope threatened to make havoc of, and cast confusion into, its organization for want of more elbow room.

It does not take the Jew long to acclimatize himself, morally and physically, in the country of his adoption. If anything, he has a tendency, which would be amusing if it were not pathetic, to out-royal the king, that is, to accentuate his acquired characteristics more than is quite necessary. He is, perhaps, over-anxious to impress his fellow-citizen with the compliment he is paying him—the highest one man can pay another—in tarring himself with the same brush. But of his sincerity there can be no doubt; he does not stop at the external and superficial. In the countries where he is allowed to come in by the front door, and can fearlessly show himself at the windows, there is no heart more truly in accord than his with all the phases of the national destiny. He rejoices in his country's joys, he sorrows in her calamities, as though they were part and parcel of his individual self. For her sake he plucks from his heart his prejudices—a hard wrench where the roots go down century-deep. He

sacrifices for her both retrospect and prospect, his pride in a great past and his God-guaranteed hope of a specific redemption. But two things he keeps for his inalienable possession: the right to pray his prayers and the privilege of helping his poor.

The first of these reservations needs no explaining; the second is not so self-obvious. There is a narrow view which ascribes it to the desire of the community to avoid incurring unnecessary prejudices by throwing its destitute on the already heavily burdened shoulders of the British taxpayer. This is a gratuitous aspersion on the resources and generosity of a great people which is ever ready to accept the responsibilities which are, as it were, the penalty of its large-heartedness. The cynic and worldly-wise regard it as an ingenious device of purse-proud selfishness to pile up the largest possible total on the credit side in the ledgers of eternity. But sneer and pusillanimity are wrong, as usual. This clannish philanthropy is essentially a matter of sentiment, and sentiment is a property which must not be grudged to a race which has had its heart-strings so often played upon. Perhaps the forebear of this poor alien wretch spoke a word of comfort to your ancestor by the waters of Babylon; perhaps the one heartened the other for the roaring death in the arenas of Rome; or perhaps he writhed and died on the inquisitorial rack because he would not incriminate the Marrano from whom you trace your descent. All these things are more than possibilities, and one never finds it easier to pay a debt than when the heart is the only I. O. U. No set policy of temporal or spiritual import could avail as much as these vague promptings to settle accounts with an

obligation which, even if it ever had any warrant, distances of time and space ought to have rendered legendary. And though the watchword which speeds from mouth to mouth during the Passover ceremonial—"He who is hungry, let him come and eat"—must of necessity remain a formula of the lip, the sentiment of the Jew makes him practical enough to attempt the spirit where the effecting of the letter would be absurd.

Perhaps some thoughts like these were agitating the mind of the lady who, with her ten-year-old daughter, was entering the offices of the Board that Sunday afternoon; at any rate, she looked serious enough for it. Once inside, she stopped with an irresolution which showed her to be a stranger there. A deferential clerk stepped up and asked her business.

"I—I would like to see some one in authority," she said.

The clerk looked doubtful. "May I know your name, please?" he asked.

The lady opened her satchel and produced a card. The sight of the card-case, as well as of the crocodile leather purse, served to set the clerk's doubts at rest, and with a hurried: "Take a seat, please," he disappeared into one of the inner chambers. A minute or two afterwards he re-appeared with a benevolent-looking old gentleman.

"Good afternoon," said the old gentleman, smiling. "Your name is not entirely unknown to me, Mrs. Duveen. What can I do for you?"

"I should like to make myself useful in some way. . . ."

"Ah, as honorary visitor?" interrupted the old

gentleman. "I am delighted; we have plenty of room for additional workers."

"When can I start?" asked Mrs. Duveen.

"There is a slight formality of nomination and election to be gone through; but there will be no difficulty in that," replied the old gentleman. "Meantime you might perhaps accompany one of our paid investigators on his rounds to get some insight into the nature of your duties. Perhaps you would like to take advantage of your being on the spot and—that is, if your time permits."

"Oh, I have plenty of time," said Mrs. Duveen, and there was a suspicion of a sigh in her words.

"Is any one of the men in?" asked the old gentleman of the clerk.

It appeared there was; and presently Mrs. Duveen had been placed in charge of an escort to whom the old gentleman explained the circumstances of her call.

"I should have taken the pleasure of accompanying you myself, but I am the Chairman of to-day's rota, and there is a great deal of work waiting for me. By the way, is there any one particular kind of case you are more interested in than another?"

"Yes, in widows."

The old gentleman nodded intelligently with a sympathetic look at her weeds and crape.

"There is a widow's case first on my list," said the paid investigator; "a Mrs. Lipcott, of Narrow Alley, not very far from here."

Then the benevolent old gentleman shook hands with Mrs. Duveen, dutifully pinched the little girl's cheek, at which the latter showed considerable indignation, and a moment afterward the party of three had

sallied out upon their expedition, while the radiant August sun overhead shone his hardest to give the lie to any suggestion of care and poverty in a world he had tried for thousands and thousands of years to make an imitation heaven.

"I'm taking you the best way I can," said the paid investigator apologetically to Mrs. Duveen, who smiled her gratitude.

Sunday, as everyone knows, is market day down in Spitalfields; and though business is practically over by midday, the locality was littered with an aftermath of putrid oranges, sodden poultry-plumage, and other nondescript uglinesses. Once the little girl seized her mother by the hand, and pointing to the gutter, cried eagerly: "Look, mamma, there's a pussy asleep," and the paid investigator was not so cruel as to disillusion her.

"Yes, everything down here is bad," he said wearily, "bad for the sight, bad for the smell, bad for the heart."

Mrs. Duveen nodded a sorrowful assent. "I did not know how bad," she murmured.

"And perhaps there's worse in store," said the paid investigator, thinking of their errand.

Mrs. Duveen refrained from shivering out of deference to the sunshine; but she could not avert a sinking of her heart as they paused for a moment at the entrance to Narrow Alley. So far she had known of misery only by hearsay; now she was about to view it, eye to eye, touch it with her hand. She felt as a young medical may feel at his first autopsy.

"I hope that there will be room upstairs for the three of us," said the paid investigator, half to himself, as

they entered the narrow-necked passage. The ground-floor tenants opened their door, and watched them with inquisitive eyes; two half-grown girls surreptitiously sniffed the lavender emanating from Mrs. Duveen's unstoppered scent bottle—they did not get a treat like that every day.

The paid investigator, having enquired for Mrs. Lipcott's room, and having been assured of her presence at home, mounted the staircase, followed by Mrs. Duveen and the little girl. His knock, as he fully expected, was not answered immediately; he knew that poverty breeds suspicion. Then the door was opened by Leuw, who stared in large-eyed wonder at the callers. But the paid investigator unceremoniously brushed him aside, inviting his two companions to enter with him. Mrs. Lipcott hastily laid something aside and got up.

The paid investigator's first glance lighted on Phil, whose head peeped forth from under the blankets.

"Is the boy ill?" asked the paid investigator, producing pencil and note-book.

Mrs. Lipcott was still dumbfounded by the apparition of the strangers, and Leuw's tight-set lips showed the umbrage he had taken at the paid investigator's brusque handling of him; so it devolved upon Phil himself to answer the query.

"Please, sir, I ain't ill, but—mother's mending my trousers."

The paid investigator seemed to find neither pathos nor humor in the reply, for turning again to Mrs. Lipcott, he continued in business-like tone:

"How much do you earn a week?"

Mrs. Lipcott reflected a moment, and began her an-

swer; but she had only got as far as: "Well, it's all according, sir," when Leuw stepped forward, gently pushed his mother on one side and, lifting his scowling face to the paid investigator's, said:

"Look here, we've had enough of your cheek; who are you?"

It stands to reason that the paid investigator was taken aback; when he recovered himself, he gave a little laugh and replied good-humoredly:

"You're a bit forward for your age, little man; but your mother knows all about it."

"About what?" asked Mrs. Lipcott in amazement.

The paid investigator became impatient. "I really can't waste my time with you; I've got five other cases to do yet. Tell me distinctly what you want the Board to do for you."

"Do you come from the Board?" faltered Mrs. Lipcott.

"Yes, of course. Here's your application. You are Mrs. Lipcott, aren't you?"

"Yes, but . . ." Mrs. Lipcott looked round her helplessly; then she glanced at Leuw, and her eye lit up with intelligence.

"Why didn't you tell me you did it?" she said reproachfully. "If I thought you wanted me to ask the Board to help us . . ."

"I write to the Board to help us!" cried Leuw half inarticulate with conflicting emotions. "What do you take me for, mother?"

Then a sudden thought struck him:

"Did you do it, Phil?"

"I didn't, I swear I didn't," whimpered Phil, very much frightened.

"You see there's some mistake somewhere," said Leuw addressing himself to the gape-mouthed paid investigator. "We don't want any Board here; we're not beggars. Now, perhaps, you'll say 'Good afternoon' when you go; you didn't when you came in, you know."

Mrs. Duveen had been a silent and disconcerted witness of the strange proceedings. Her sight had, however, been busier than her hearing. From the moment of her entry, her eyes had been taking stock of Phil's wistful little face. At the first glance it had appealed to her with a vague sense of familiarity, of something remembered—a remembrance instinct with infinite heart-ache, and yet gladdening in having taken to itself a strangely palpable shape. It made her thoughts start off at a gallop. Little Dulcie was nestling against her mother, scared and trembling. What a terrible boy that was—what a temper he had! And yet she could almost hate herself for feeling afraid of him; she did not quite know what all the quarrel was about; and yet she was almost certain that the boy was in the right. If only someone would go and pat him on the head, he would quiet down at once; and—well, she would not mind doing it herself.

The paid investigator had, meantime, thought the matter over, and took it in its right light. He shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose, then, there is a mistake, and I've got nothing else to say. We had better go, Mrs. Duveen."

Mrs. Duveen pulled herself together, and stepped up to Mrs. Lipcott.

"I am very sorry if you have had any annoyance," she said very gently, "and I only want you to remember that I am quite innocent in the matter."

"Oh, there's no harm done, lady—no harm, thank you very much," said Mrs. Lipcott, still in great confusion.

"Good-by," said Dulcie, suddenly, coming close to Leuw, and tendering him her hand.

Leuw drew back for an instant as though the timid little hand were a great threatening fist. How—why was it that he had not become cognizant of her presence before? Why? Because he had been so busy playing the rough and the bully. It struck him suddenly that he could have effected his purpose as thoroughly without taking up such a bull-dog attitude; and he felt very much ashamed of himself. It was these great frank eyes before him that shamed him; if he could only pluck up heart to look full into them for but an instant—ah! there, he had done it, and simultaneously his hand responded to hers. Now he knew, by practical experience, how good it felt to have one's sins forgiven. He did not mind the tall lady in black bestowing such a fixed look on Phil at parting; he was not jealous; he had something better. For the dingy door-panel seemed illuminated by a smile long after the face to which it properly belonged had vanished.

The party of three reached the bottom without exchanging a word.

"I am afraid you have not made an agreeable start," said the paid investigator finally.

"I don't mind," said Mrs. Duveen absently; "but I can't help feeling terribly puzzled. Is it a hoax?"

"It is, and it isn't. The people want assistance badly enough, as you saw. They are simply too proud to take it. Probably some kind-hearted busybody of

their acquaintance sent in the application without their knowledge, thinking they would hardly have the courage to refuse the help which is being thrust upon them. I must say such obstinacy . . .”

“Obstinacy?” interrupted Mrs. Duveen.

“Well, call it strength of character,” proceeded the paid investigator, somewhat shamefacedly; “still, whatever it is, it is not an everyday occurrence. Ah, so you won’t come any further to-day?”

“No, thank you,” said Mrs. Duveen, who had stopped. “Don’t think I’m disheartened, but I must not tire my little girl too much. She insisted on coming with me and—well, I believe in the value of teaching children by object lessons.”

An hour after Mrs. Duveen was back in her beautiful house up St. John’s Wood. All through the train journey she had given such niggardly response to Dulcie’s incessant questionings as to the moral and meaning of the afternoon that Dulcie was quite surprised when her mother put her a question in turn:

“Which of the two boys did you like best?”

“The one that shouted,” replied Dulcie, without hesitation; “he looked so—so honest about the eyes. I noticed them particularly.”

It was a curious question, thought Dulcie, but a more curious one followed: “Do you remember a boy that used to run about the house years ago?”

Dulcie puckered her brows in a desperate attempt at recollection, but at last she had to own up her failure.

“If you remembered him at all, you would have liked the other one better—the one in bed, you know,” said Mrs. Duveen, with a tremble in her voice;

“and—and, Dulcie, as I looked at him and compared him with the boy that used to run about the house, I couldn’t tell the difference.”

Dulcie gazed at her awestruck. “Mamma, did I ever have a brother?”

Mrs. Duveen nodded; she could not trust her voice at all now.

“And what has that to do with the other boy?” continued Dulcie timidly.

“I don’t know, dear, but I’m thinking.” And Mrs. Duveen thought about the boy who so much resembled her dead son all that evening and half the next day; by that time she seemed to have arrived at some conclusion. For she locked the door of her room, and with trembling fingers she wrote a letter to Mrs. Lipcott.

CHAPTER IV

THE letter reached its destination by the last delivery that same evening. It was something like three years since Mrs. Lipcott had been the recipient of a communication by post, and the event naturally made a striking impression upon her; equally naturally she kept turning the letter over and over in her hands, considering who her correspondent might be.

"I know," said Phil suddenly, "it's from the 'black' lady that was here yesterday."

"And she's sent us some money," supplemented Leuw, already framing in his mind a suitable reply which was to accompany the return of the gift.

After this plausible conjecture, there was no longer any reason to delay arriving at certainty. Mrs. Lipcott looked at the neat, clear-cut handwriting, and felt equal to tackling it herself instead of handing it to Leuw.

"Dear Mrs. Lipcott," she began aloud, "the writer of this is the lady who called on you yesterday in company with the Board of Guardians official."

"See! I told you," cried Phil, triumphantly.

Leuw looked at him sharply, suspicious and annoyed at Phil's part of the conjecture having come true, whereas his own, referring to the enclosure of a dole, had gone wide of the fulfilment.

During the interruption Mrs. Lipcott had glanced at the succeeding lines; what she read made her turn

white, and the paper fluttered out of her hands. Silently Leuw picked it up, and held it out to her.

"No, read it yourself," she murmured; "read—it—to Phil."

"Board of Guardians official," resumed Leuw slowly, his voice threatening vengeance against the writer who had "given his mother such a turn." "My reason for writing to you is to put to you a proposal. Perhaps the only result will be to make you think me a foolish, self-loving woman; for—you see I am frank with you—my motive is rather one of selfishness than of kindness of heart. I want you to let me adopt your younger boy. He will replace for me a darling son whom I lost years ago, and of whom he is the living counterpart. I cannot guess whence I am taking the courage to address to you such a request; but I feel as though God himself had put it into my heart, and therefore I do not make myself any reproaches. I don't know what you are to gain in the matter. The only return I can offer you is the knowledge that your child by blood and mine by adoption will have his path in life made smooth for him. I am rich; I can offer him advantages which—pardon me—are apparently out of your reach. If he has any bent for studying, I can indulge it to the utmost of his wishes. The only sacrifice I shall ask of him is to take my name and to return me a hundredth part of the love which I am ready to bestow upon him. I do not want you to decide immediately. Ask God; and when He has answered you, let me know too. Yours in sisterhood, Rose Duveen."

More than once Leuw had tried hard to stop himself in the reading, but in vain; the fervid words

dragged him on till he had come to the end. When he finally paused, the silence hummed aloud with persistent echoes.

"What are we all afraid of? Why don't we talk?" asked Leuw at last.

"Because I am waiting for God to talk; till then I can say nothing," replied Mrs. Lipcott with quivering mouth and far-off eyes.

"Well, then, suppose meantime Phil puts in his spoke," suggested Leuw grimly.

"Oh, Leuw, don't ask me to say anything," came piteously from Phil. "What does it all mean? I don't want to guess—because I might guess right."

"What it means?" replied Leuw with an assumption of airiness. "Nothing very much. The lady wants you to live at her house, as soon as you like. Lucky you won't have to take long over your packing. By the way, there are those three collars we've got between us—who is to have the odd one?"

For answer Phil burst into tears. "Don't—don't speak to me so cruel, Leuw, dear," he sobbed. "It isn't my fault; I didn't ask her to come,—and—and if she wants to take me away from here, I'll run and tell the police."

Leuw's arm was round his neck in a moment. "No, young 'un, 'tain't your fault. I only wanted to know what you thought of it."

"Then, why did you go round the corner like to do it?" sobbed Phil, still disconsolate.

"It's all right, mother; don't worry," cried Leuw cheerily; "me and Phil have settled it."

Mrs. Lipcott was slowly recovering herself. Her mind had sunk prostrate beneath the weight of the

dilemma wherewith it had so suddenly become burdened; at last it stood upright again. Her first impulse was that of unreasoning anger against the woman who, seemingly without a qualm, claimed of her half her mother-heart, and compelled her to ponder, for the first time in her life, whether or not it was not the more precious half. What a wondrous thing wealth must be that it even made people bold to beg! But no; she would teach it a lesson, she would shame it into self-continenence, she would . . . and then? What good would come to her by indulging her malice? It would not kill in her the knowledge that she, even she, loved herself better than her child—that in the moment when her motherhood had been put to its only test, she had failed miserably. "Make his path smooth in life." Could she ever hope to do that? Could she expect to be a recompense to him for his bruising against the stumbling-blocks of a self-hewn future? Nay, she herself would become the obstacle that thwarted him from the start, and one does not love an obstacle any the better because its name is—Mother.

Thank God at least that the letter was not her secret. She would for certain have succumbed to the temptation of suppressing it; and surely the pain that may honestly seek the daylight is happiness to the remorse that burrows tunnels through the soul. She looked up and saw her boys' eyes fixed on her questioningly.

"What was it you asked me?" she said half at random.

"Asked you nothing," replied Leuw: "I was only saying that the 'black' woman's off."

Mrs. Lipcott shook her head. "Leuw, we must think it over."

Leuw's eyes opened wide in surprise. "Why, mother, what's there to think over? We're not going to give Phil away, are we?"

"Not give him away, but lend him away. Leuw; he'll always belong to us wherever he is. We'll do the lady a favor, that's all."

"Favor? Fine chance we've got of getting on if we go chucking favors at any promiscuous stranger that asks for 'em. Not if I know it," cried Leuw hotly.

Mrs. Lipcott swallowed something and proceeded:

"Don't be unjust, Leuw. The profit is not all on her side. Look what she's going to do for Phil."

"Yes, she's going to put her label on him—what is it? Duveen? Wish you good morning, Mr. Philip Duveen. There's a name to go to bed with!"

"She'll make a gentleman of him; she'll let him study," went on Mrs. Lipcott, half to herself.

"Let me study—will she?" broke in Phil eagerly.

"Ah, that's the bait that's going to hook you, I suppose," growled Leuw. "What was that you said just now about the police?"

"Leuw," said Mrs. Lipcott, making a great effort, "you must let me decide in this, it concerns me more than you."

"No, it doesn't," replied Leuw sullenly; "I'm fighting for my brother."

"And I am fighting for myself. I would have rather kept it in my heart, but you make me say it. I want Phil to go to the lady because otherwise I should feel afraid. If I said no, I might suffer for it afterward. Suppose—God forbid—things were to go badly with him when he grows up. Whom would he blame, me or you? If I knew I should be alive to hear his hard

words, I should not mind so much; but I might be dead, and have no chance of softening them with my tears. Can you understand now, Leuw?"

Leuw's eyes were on the ground, and his reply was very humble: "Yes, mother, I can."

"Then let us make up our minds to it cheerfully, as to a blessing of God which has come overnight. As long as Phil will not forget us. . . ."

She broke off, and half-stifled sobs finished the sentence.

Phil ran up, and crouched by her side: "I shan't go—I shan't," he cried.

"That's right, now that we've at last settled it nicely, you come and upset it all again," said Leuw with a gruffness that was artificial on the face of it. "Leave off worrying mother—she's crying for joy, that's what she is. You're going to be a swell, and wear a short jacket, like those ikey boys that come and sit on the platform on Distribution Day and . . ."

Here his voice snapped, and without making any further pretense at being a man, he crouched down on the other side of his mother and—but no, it must not be told. Even the man in the moon, who just then caught a glimpse of the group through the window, solemnly made up his mind not to say a word about it.

CHAPTER V

THE next day Phil nearly had a nasty accident in the way of black-marking his untarnished school record by inattention. To a question as to the name of the last Plantagenet he replied with a vague reference to the Grampian Hills, which showed that his mind was temporarily located in a different department of learning. His distraction, however, was very natural. Before him lay the most difficult task he had yet encountered—the reply letter to Mrs. Duveen. It had been resolved in family council to leave the writing of it entirely to him. And so he had been racking his brains all the day, realizing dimly and for the first time that life's problems are harder than those set by any other schoolmaster. It was not till he had got home again, and was sitting alone in the room, pen in hand, with the blank sheet of note-paper staring at him defiantly, that at last an inspiration came to him. What a fool he had been! This was not a case for brain-racking at all. All he had to do was to keep quite still and listen to the dictation of his heart; if the "black" woman wanted long words and finical phrases, she could look them up in the dictionary. He wasn't going to bother; and if it didn't please her, there were plenty of other boys. . . . And so, while the truculent fit was upon him, "Please, lady," he began, "mother don't mind for me to go and live with you, though she ain't very glad of it, as you would soon know for

yourself if you saw her red eyes. But she don't mind, because she says you'll do all right for me, and put me in the way of being a scholar, and what concerns the grub, I ain't so very keen on it, which I want you to take notice that I'm used to three meals a day, which are tea and bread for breakfast, bread and tea for the middle of the day, and a heavy feed of taters and fish for the evening—taters always and fish sometimes; not to forget meat on Sabbaths and the holidays. We've tried living on less, but it made us feel ill, and I once heard Leuw asking God why He didn't let him get born without a stomach at all, so I can't let you off anything, but if there's going to be any humbug about the scholaring, you'd better say so at once, and we'll part as good friends as if we had never known each other, and I'll want you to send me to a High School as high as what Mike Aarons went to when his father won all the money in the lottery, and they moved up Dalston way, which besides I'll want to see mother and Leuw very often, and if it's too far to walk, you'll have to stand the riding money; having filled up the four pages, this letter is from Philip Lipcott."

Carefully Phil read and re-read his epistle. It did not seem to him that it could be improved upon. He was especially gratified by its high-handed manner; it was just as well that the "black" woman should know whom she had to deal with. Of course, she had a very kind, soft face, but one could never tell by that. Mrs. Daniels looked very good-natured, but she always made his mother come two or three times for the money. He had a vague idea that perhaps it would be wise to consult a lawyer, or have something done

at Somerset House before he entered into any definite arrangement with the "black" woman. Nevertheless, the whole thing instilled into him a splendid feeling of initiative and independence. He wondered to how many boys of his age had ever been entrusted the responsibility of inditing and forwarding a letter "all on their own." Both his mother and Leuw had disclaimed any desire to know the more detailed form of his reply, as long as it kept to the general sense of an affirmative to Mrs. Duveen's proposal. If only he could have earned the penny for the stamp himself instead of having to ask his mother for it!

He enveloped and addressed the letter, and went down into the street to post it. At the pillar-box he waited, and looked round if perchance any acquaintance of his might pass by and watch him in his supreme moment. A man in a hurry nearly jerked the letter out of his hand, and then, with an apprehensive look at the muddy pavement, Phil quickly slipped it into the box. He heard it drop—"thud," he could almost have said—to the bottom, and the sound filled him with a sense of the irretrievable, which nearly frightened him. For the first time it came home to him, but only as in a dream, that he had done something terribly momentous; that he had taken his destiny in his hands, and had bent it out of its appointed shape. But people considerably over twelve have felt so, and have turned white at the feeling. He got out of reach of the pillar-box as fast as he could, but his apprehension seemed to keep pace with him. Never before had the world worn such an aspect of loneliness. He longed for his mother, for Leuw; his mother was out on an all-day job, and Leuw had for the past week

or so gone somewhere straight from school, and had not returned till supper-time. He volunteered no explanation of his mysterious absences, and it would have been absurd to question Leuw about anything he did or did not. Phil sauntered on aimlessly, and presently he came across Yellow Joe kicking his heels against the lamp-post, hands in pocket. Yellow Joe was not a nickname, but a faithful translation of the more official Joseph Saffron. Happily, he was one of the few select with whom Leuw allowed Phil to associate.

"Hullo, Joe," said Phil.

"That you, Phil? Why ain't you indoors reading?"

"Had to come out on business—been posting a letter."

In accordance with the ethics of politeness current in those parts, Yellow Joe, of course, immediately asked for the name of the addressee and a concise summary of its contents. But his inquisitiveness served to remind Phil that for the present it might be advisable to refrain from making the thing public property, especially as he had omitted to ascertain Leuw's view on the matter of publication. He parried Joe's enquiries as well as he could. Then he proceeded to the attack himself.

"Know any rich people, Joe?" he asked casually.

Joe ostentatiously dived deep into his pocket.

"How much do you want to borrow?"

Phil laughed. "No larks—real rich people; ever had anything to do with any?"

"Well," pondered Joe, "can't say I know 'em inside and out sort of, but when I was in the choir at

Baysland Street—you've never been in the choir, have you?"

"No, didn't have luck—neither me nor Leuw; never got word of anybody being wanted till it was too late."

"Well, once we had a Chanuka treat—bloke that used to come and interfere with the choirmaster at the rehearsals asked us up to his house."

"Yes, and what happened?"

"All right, don't gasp like that; I'll lend you some of my breath if you're short. Asked us up to the house, he did. Soon as we got inside there was a man at the door—sort of coachman, you know—what made us scrape our boots till we wondered that the mat didn't catch fire, and Jack Stump's came right off, because he was wearing his grandfather's; and a bit farther on stood the man what had asked us up, and we had to hold out our hands for him to look at, and those that he couldn't see his face in were sent off to a room with a big washing-tub running hot and cold—you bet I used hot—and then he marched us in, and his missis looked at us through goggles with a long handle to them, and then, of course, we had sweets and cakes—oh, did we? No, we didn't, because we first had to tootle up all the Service tunes—well, I suppose they called it supper, lot of little bits of nothing, and because we didn't know which way to eat 'em, we all said, 'No, thank you,' when the slavey brought 'em round, after which there was a magic lantern—was there? Lay you a house to a brick there wasn't. The man starts telling you a yarn about Judas Maccabeus, what a good boy he was, trying to make us feel ashamed of ourselves—once I gaped and he spots me, oh, my jaws; wonder I didn't dive my ivories back into the

gums the way I clicked 'em together again. If that man's alive now, it's only because we couldn't decide which was the hurtfullest way of killing him."

Now, Yellow Joe's powers of judgment were notoriously untrustworthy; when he did not understate a case, he overstated it—it was always a toss-up which. But the circumstantial evidence he adduced as to the nefariousness of this particular rich man left Phil no loophole for disbelief.

"Been to any others since?" he quavered.

"Catch me; 'once bitten, twice shy.'"

The pregnant terseness of the colloquialism amounted to a denunciation; but what was worse, Joe's inability to furnish other instances of wealth, which might go some way toward mitigating the unfavorable impression of the first, compelled Phil to magnify a specimen into a species—and a very bad species for anyone to have to do with it seemed. Perhaps if he had met Yellow Joe before posting the letter, which by now was, no doubt, already on its way to take the tidings of his recklessness. . . Bah, surely his mother knew of these things as much as Yellow Joe; his mother loved him—she would not deliver him into the hands of enemies or disagreeable people, to say the least of it. Yellow Joe was no cheerful company; he would go away and leave him to the pangs of his prejudices and distorted observations. Still, though Yellow Joe's responses did not impress him materially, he determined to consult no other oracles for the time being. This involved his avoiding any stray associate whom he might meet, lest he should feel tempted to violate his resolution, and left him with a couple of hours of solitude to kill, which was to

him a new if not pleasurable experience. The cheapest way of doing it was by the expenditure of a little more sole-leather, although his foot-gear showed already large deficits on that point. He wondered if the supply of boots was included among the "black" woman's liabilities to him, which may be taken to show that his notions of his future relationship with her were as yet of the haziest. So he walked on, stepping as warily as possible to avoid unnecessary friction with the pavement. But even thus he soon got beyond his everyday radius, and presently reached the city, and was passing by one of the great Railway Centres where all London seemed to be taking train to undreamt-of destinations. "All London" included an old lady who waddled cumbrously up the stone steps while keeping a persistent eye on the green portmanteau that stumbled along her side fixed on a pair of human shoulders. At the second glance, however, Phil observed that it only obscured, and did not act as substitute for, the head which is the customary upshot of shoulders in general. A sound of hard-drawn breath, with a sob for tag, convinced him finally of the normal humanity of what he had for the moment supposed to be the greatest freak of the century—the trunk-headed boy. A sudden curiosity, which might have been the afterthroes of his initial astonishment, compelled him to follow the couple; he was eager to see if a strange presentiment, taking its cue from the familiar aspect of the carrier's clothing, would realize itself in his face. In the waiting-room the carrier was ordered to set down his burden. Phil looked—of course it was Leuw; there he stood, red and panting, whilst the old lady counted six half-pennies into his hand, which trembled as with palsy.

"Why didn't you say it was you? I'd have helped you up those steps with the thing," Phil accosted his brother a few seconds later.

"You here?" said Leuw unemotionally. "Been spying, eh?"

"May I drop dead if . . ."

Leuw nodded to imply that as far as he was concerned the incident was closed. Phil walked on beside him, wrestling both with his thoughts and words.

"You might have hurt yourself," he broke out at last.

"I chanced that; besides they ain't always so heavy."

"Is that what you've been doing every evening?"

"Whenever I did anything. Jobs are scarce, you know, and plenty to do 'em."

"If mother was to know!"

"Look here, young Phil," said Leuw, turning on him with leisurely deliberation, "mother won't know,—understand?"

"I'll feel all the time like thinking a lie."

"Never mind what you feel. If I don't say anything about feeling,"—here Leuw rubbed his shoulders ruefully—"I don't see where you come in."

"Then what do you do it for?" asked Phil tearfully.

"Because I've suddenly got gone on toffee-apples—can't live without 'em. What, you don't believe? Well, mind you don't cut yourself—you're sharper than you think. 'Tain't toffee-apples—it's—it's—rolling up shirt sleeves, remember? I've got to get ready, and only four more days to do it in."

"Get ready? And what's this you're doing now?"

"Sort of preliminary; when a man wants to set up in business, what's he got to have?"

"I don't know, Leuw—I never thought of it."

"Good thing then I didn't wait for you to tell me; rhino he's got to have. That's what I've done the carrying for. Don't fret—I'm not going to stick to it; it don't make you feel proud of yourself. But I can't really call myself a man till I've left school for good and all, and a kid can do a lot of things that a man can't, eh, Phil?"

"But—but mother thinks you're going to Spiegler's . . ."

"As shop-boy? Shilling a week, and find your own aprons? Not yet. I'm going to have a firm of my own first—'Lewis Lipcott and no Co.' Very sorry for Spiegler, I am sure, but if I go broke, I'll see what I can do for him then. Come on home; that green old leather box has done me for to-day," he concluded, working his left arm somewhat limply. And by the time they got back to Narrow Alley, Phil flattered himself that he had attained to a faint glimmer of his brother's capacity for enterprise.

Although Phil's separation from his mother and Leuw was by now an accepted fact, a tremor of consternation ran through the Lipcott household when Mrs. Duveen's letter, in answer to Phil's, came, and made final arrangements for his transfer. The heart-felt, re-assuring phrases lost color alongside of the statement that she would call to fetch him next Friday afternoon; the gentle suggestion read like an arbitrary decree, a menace. It said, if not in so many words: two days longer you shall be complete, and then I shall come and help myself to my share of you.

And yet the pain of it proved outwardly a blessing: by settling deeper in their hearts it could not look out through their eyes; and each one, seeing the others seemingly resigned, grew afraid of hinting at his own discontent,

CHAPTER VI

ALL next Friday morning Mrs. Duveen was troubled by a question which, on the face of it, was hardly justified in causing her a moment's indecision: Was she to drive down to Narrow Alley in the carriage or not? And, indeed, it was only by a small margin that it was decided in the affirmative. With the instinct of a good woman she shrank from flaunting unnecessarily the paraphernalia of wealth before eyes which had, no doubt, many a time and oft looked hungrily into baker-shops—the eyes of Narrow Alley. But then this carriage of hers had been the last present her husband had given her; in using it upon the errand before her, it seemed somehow as though he were sharing with her its responsibility and giving it his sanction. For though her resolve had not known an instant's weakness from the hour of its birth, she liked to think that she was doing his pleasure as well as her own, by making the gift act as a substitute for the giver. He would then explain to her dead boy—of course, she never imagined them otherwise than as being in close companionship—that he had no cause for jealousy, that he was not being ousted from his mother's heart, but that his mother was giving him the supremest proof of her loyalty by setting up a living monument of him in her home.

Furthermore—here her tears changed to a smile—she hoped the sight of her equipage would give little Phil abundant guarantee that he was certain of his three meals a day.

Then she suddenly pulled herself up short. "I am getting old and fanciful," she said to herself. But she was wrong; she was not getting old—at least not at a faster rate than any woman of thirty-five has a right to; nor was it fancifulness on her part. She was only a little excited, as was natural under the circumstances. Dulcie, of course, had asked to be allowed to accompany her, and Mrs. Duveen had readily acquiesced. Listening to Dulcie's prattle would be the surest way of preventing her own play of thoughts from becoming a disorganized romp.

Dulcie came up to expectation in so far that, when the carriage got into the mazy mysteries of the Spital-fields district, Mrs. Duveen was collected enough to instruct the bewildered coachman in the way he should go. Although the streets were tolerably clear of traffic, a step-by-step mode of advance was necessary, owing to the teeming multitudes of children, some of whom had a dangerous habit of cropping up within six inches of the horse's fore feet. As they neared the mouth of Narrow Alley, Dulcie suddenly shot out her arm and pointed:

"Look, mamma, there he is."

"Who is?"

"The boy who shouted. He was peeping round the corner, and when he saw us, he ran away."

Mrs. Duveen was not displeased that her coming had been observed and heralded. It would afford the poor thin-faced woman upstairs a moment or two in which to pass through the acuteness of the final wrench, and wrenches are best dealt with when no unnecessary looker-on is about. Nor did Mrs. Duveen find herself disappointed in her theory. When

she and Dulcie entered the little room, Mrs. Lipcott received them with a smile, which almost succeeded in concealing the effort it cost.

"I don't know how to thank you," she began, gripping Mrs. Duveen's extended hand.

"Well, and what am I to say?" replied Mrs. Duveen, returning the other's grip almost convulsively.

"Then please don't let us say anything about it at all; I dare say we have both thought more about it than we could ever put into words."

Mrs. Duveen looked at her with a glance wherein pity struggled with admiration; then she said:

"How wonderfully brave you are!"

"I, brave? It's you who are brave."

"You mock me, Mrs. Lipcott; I am weak and selfish."

But Mrs. Lipcott shook her head persistingly as she went on, still with that tense smile of hers:

"Why, look at the great risk you are taking on yourself. What do you know about my child? How can you be sure that he isn't everything that is bad and abominable? You couldn't even tell whether he had straight limbs or not. My very readiness to part with him ought to have been a warning to you."

"Well?" asked Mrs. Duveen expectantly.

"All that never struck you—or if it did, you never considered it. You didn't try to safeguard yourself against making a bad bargain, as other people would have done under the circumstances. You didn't 'make enquiries'; you didn't come and size him up inside and outside like a calf at a fair. You just did as your heart told you to do; didn't you want a lot of courage for that?"

This time it was surprise that kept Mrs. Duveen silent. How was she to know that the only compensation on earth which the poor possess is the power of ready expression? Life gives them words, because it is afraid that their dumb thoughts would kill them.

"I am very glad you said that, Mrs. Lipcott," replied Mrs. Duveen finally. "Till this moment I did not think there was anything in this affair that might stand to my credit. You don't know what a deed of charity you have done in making me think less meanly of myself."

Mrs. Lipcott's lips moved as though she were about to speak; then they shut tightly, and her gaze wandered from Mrs. Duveen's face to Phil in silent entreaty. Mrs. Duveen understood.

"If Phil is ready"—she said, her voice very soft and kindly.

"Yes, he's quite ready."

It was Leuw who answered. Even had he known how ill-tempered his words sounded, he would not have cared. It was really very annoying. Ever since she had come into the room he had felt the little girl looking at him, and the annoying part of it was that while she did that, he could not look at her, much as he wanted to. Once or twice their glances had crossed, and he had colored up and looked away in a hurry. Why should he? Especially when she herself not so much as drooped an eyelash, but continued her equanimous stare in utter contentment. For all she seemed to care he might be a wax figure or something painted on a wall. His manly soul revolted against this implied inferiority; and that, combined with a nameless ache into which his brother Phil had re-

solved himself, had put the cloud on his face and the rasp into his voice. He, too, wished that the whole thing were over and done with. It was hard work keeping down the gulps; besides, it might be dangerous; at least, it hurt enough.

Well, it could not last much longer now; already things were taking place between his mother and Phil. The lady in "black" was looking out through the window. The sight gratified Leuw curiously; her window was probably ordinary glass, and had no cardboard patched across to make it picturesque. And then he started violently; the little girl was talking to him.

"I hope you aren't cross because we are taking your brother away with us?"

There—nearly; that gulp had almost gone too high—he only managed to swallow it by the veriest nick of chance.

"Oh, it's all right; don't trouble about that," he answered vaguely.

"We'll be very kind to him."

"You'd better."

And then he ought to have felt glad, because his brusqueness visibly disconcerted the self-possessed little girl, and made her at a loss what to say next. But before he could put his emotions into the right shape, Phil was upon him with streaming eyes and sobbing: "'by, Leuw."

Here was another dilemma: ought he to kiss Phil? But Phil solved the difficulty by throwing his arms about his neck and—well, and then there was no help for it.

"Here, leave off blubbering—what'll the people downstairs think?" Leuw whispered severely.

"I can't help it," replied Phil, and then his tears ceased immediately. As he was going away, it did not so much matter to him what the people downstairs thought; but the disgrace of it was a bad legacy to leave Leuw, and Leuw didn't deserve it.

Mrs. Lipcott went to the door. Mrs. Duveen, however, stood irresolute and embarrassed. She did not know how to express in words what she wanted to say. But Mrs. Lipcott guessed, and saved her further trouble.

"No, not a penny, Mrs. Duveen. I don't want it to appear that I had sold my child. You wouldn't like it either—would you?"

"Not in the way you put it," faltered Mrs. Duveen; "but I should so much like to do something to make your life easier. Perhaps your other boy—perhaps I might find you a situation in the office of one of my friends."

"Much obliged, lady," replied Leuw, to whom she had turned at the last words, "but I have already made up my mind what to take to."

Mrs. Duveen shrugged her shoulders in token of despair.

"It almost looks as if you had both determined to punish me," she said, smiling tremulously. And then she became quite serious.

"But you will promise me, Mrs. Lipcott, that if ever you cannot help yourself, you will look on me as a sister."

Mrs. Lipcott gave the promise; it did not commit her to anything. And then, without any visible concerting, a move was made downstairs. Phil headed it. He knew by so doing he laid himself open to the

suspicion that he was in a great hurry to shake the dust of Narrow Alley off his feet; but he preferred being misinterpreted to the possibility of being unnecessarily looked at by his mother and Leuw. A cursory glance into the copper kettle, which Mrs. Lipcott's polishing had converted into the family mirror, had shown him that his face had resumed an aspect of tolerable composure. And by taking the lead he ran less risk of breaking down again and so becoming a delectation to the "people downstairs" and a humiliation to Leuw. Next came his mother and Mrs. Duveen, the latter giving the former some details as to her probable movements in the near future, which would perhaps include a visit to the seaside, for the benefit of Phil. The rear was brought up by Dulcie and Leuw. She had waited at the top of the staircase till Leuw had finished fastening the door, and then without further ceremony had thrust her hand in his. The descent looked dangerous.

But Leuw did not appreciate her trust; he promptly withdrew his hand.

"Why?" asked Dulcie, looking up at him in pained wonder.

"Dirty fingers—spoil your mittens," he explained speciously.

"They ain't mittens—they're gloves," was the indignant retort.

Her foot emphasized her indignation by making a false step. After that there was no help for it. Leuw had to accept the pilotship.

"But only to the bottom," he threatened. He knew what awaited him then—gaping curiosity; and though the feel of the warm little hand was the most

pleasurable sensation life had yet given him, it was outweighed by fear of the ridicule he was surely storing up for himself. But Dulcie had no idea of the momentous reasons which had prompted his proviso, and straightway informed him he was horrid.

"Don't care if I am," replied Leuw.

"It's wicked not to care whether you are horrid or not," declared Dulcie.

"Dare say you've been told so yourself."

"I haven't."

"Then you ought to be."

Leuw held tight to the banisters in case he needed support against the fierce retort which no doubt was gathering during her momentary silence. He also turned his head towards her so as not to be taken by it unawares. Then he gasped. Instead of an angry frown a smile, sweet and wistful, confronted him.

"Don't let's quarrel, eh?" she said.

"All right," assented Leuw promptly, only to regret his promptness the next instant. Perhaps he had been tricked; perhaps that smile of hers was only some insidious method of attack. But because, such as it was, it did so much to lessen the pain of parting with his brother, he would look at it in all charity, and give it credit for the best intentions.

They completed the descent in silence, because they both felt that was the best way of keeping their compact. By the time they reached the court, the other three had nearly got as far as the carriage. Phil was looking at it scared. How shiny it looked; he wondered what kind of polish they used for the horse. He gave a start when Mrs. Duveen opened the door, and told somebody to get in; quite true, she meant

himself. Dare he kiss his mother once more? He would chance it, come what may. And nothing came—at least, no tears. After that he could safely give Leuw's hand another shake.

But Leuw did not let him off so cheaply; bending close to him he whispered in Phil's ear:

"Phil, do you remember the other time you rode in a carriage?"

Phil looked at him nonplussed; then he recollected.

"Yes, at father's funeral."

"And you'll never forget?"

"Never."

Leuw nodded; he was satisfied. He knew Phil had caught the inner meaning of his query. It had always been the most poignant recollection of their boyhood, that drive to the cemetery in the lumbering mourning coach in which they had sat, their arms twining about each other, their hearts closely knit by the chain of their common sorrow. The dreary scene had brought home to them how near they were to one another; it rose up in their minds whenever there was danger of a harsh thought or bitter word. But this was the first time that either had given it speech. They had arrived at the parting of their ways, and neither knew where or how their paths would cross again; each one was about to start on the forging of his life, but however it shaped, they wanted to make sure that at least one memory would be part of both and make them eternally kin. And so this was their way of swearing everlasting brotherhood.

"Never," repeated Phil, and before the word had ceased to vibrate on Leuw's hearing, the carriage was rumbling away. He did not know whether he had

answered Mrs. Duveen's kindly "good-by;" he believed he had distorted his features into a grin so as not entirely to ignore Dulcie's parting smile. But he knew nothing for certain till his mother tapped him on the arm and said:

"Let's come in, Leuw; what's the use of standing here?"

He then became aware of the surging crowd and the oppressive curiosity of the neighbors, who were overwhelming his mother with enquiries, to which she gave perfunctory replies.

Of course he would go in, and every unwarranted visitor would be shown the door. What a lot of good a little solitude would do him. He would get rid of the heavy weight of thought that was crushing his mind, and what concerned the aching smart that seemed to set his eyes on fire—perhaps he would even find a cure for that.

Tenderly he took his mother by the arm, and, looking neither right nor left, clove a way for the two of them. But his ardent desire to be left alone was not to be gratified. Scarcely had they got back to the room, and had given one look round for a familiar figure, which they knew would not be there, when the agonized creak of the staircase and the noisy swishing of frocks announced somebody's coming. Both held their breath as though that would insure the comer's passing on, but the next moment dashed their hopes, and ushered in Mrs. Diamond, red and breathless.

"Why, what's the matter—what's it all about?" she gasped.

Mrs. Lipcott looked at her with a glance which

somewhat disconcerted the visitor, for the tone of her next words was half apologetic:

"I couldn't make out what they were telling me downstairs. I just saw it drive away from a distance—the carriage, you know, and they said your little Phil was going away in it."

"Yes, Phil went away in it," corroborated Mrs. Lipcott.

"Why, who's taking him out for a drive?"

"He isn't gone for a drive. He has left us; somebody has adopted him."

"Adopted? Who is it—why don't you tell me?"

"A Mrs. Duveen," said Mrs. Lipcott wearily.

"You don't mean to say the rich Mrs. Duveen?"

"She seemed very well-to-do."

Mrs. Diamond clasped her hands together. "And to think that if I had been here ten minutes ago, I should have been able to talk to her! I've been wanting to know her for years; she'd be such a nice woman to go to have tea with. But do go on; tell me how it all happened."

Briefly Mrs. Lipcott gave an account of Mrs. Duveen's first call in the company of the paid investigator from the Board of Guardians, and what occurred subsequently. As the story proceeded, Mrs. Diamond's eyes glistened, and a fatuous look of satisfaction spread over her broad face.

"So that letter to the Board did it all?" she asked finally.

"I suppose so," was Mrs. Lipcott's quiet reply.

"Well, I wrote that letter," burst from Mrs. Diamond triumphantly.

"You did?" cried Leuw and Mrs. Lipcott in a breath.

"Yes, I did," replied Mrs. Diamond, thrusting out both her arms as if to ward off the storm of gratitude which she was sure would overwhelm her presently; "it was my idea entirely. I was your good angel as usual. Oh! when will the community recognize all the good work I am doing?"

"If it was you that sent the Board people here," began Mrs. Lipcott. . . .

"Yes?" interrupted Mrs. Diamond eagerly. Her reward was coming now.

"—then I don't thank you for it."

"Great heavens, the woman is mad," cried Mrs. Diamond, turning to an imaginary audience to testify; and then, as she saw Mrs. Lipcott was about to proceed, she waved her down fiercely:

"Don't thank me for it? Of course not. When can one ever do enough for the likes of you? You ain't satisfied that one of your—your children has been taken off your hands, and will be brought up like a prince? A fat lot you've done to deserve it. Only because my good heart wouldn't keep still, and made me think and worry about you, I've now got to run the risk of going into a fit and making poor old Diamond a widower before his time. Don't thank me? You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Leuw was standing rampant, his fists clenched at the biting words. Then he did the proper thing—he went and sat down quietly in the farthest corner; his mother would tackle her better. He was right; his mother set about her vindication, not as he would have done, with a torrent of angry recriminations, but very softly and leisurely. There was no hurry; it would take Mrs. Diamond at least two minutes to reconstruct herself after her collapse.

"It wouldn't be honest of me to pretend I was grateful to you for it, Mrs. Diamond," said Mrs. Lipcott. "I know you meant the writing of that letter for all that was good and kind, but if it hadn't been written at all, my Phil would have been here now."

Mrs. Diamond worked herself up as far as a grunt.

"Of course, I knew what it meant for him when the lady came and offered to take him to her; I dared not say 'no,' for his sake. But if the offer had never been made, how much heart-ache would I have been spared. And then, who knows it is for the best? Perhaps he would have done as well if he had been left to climb his stiles himself. You know, Mrs. Diamond, the blessing of God will any day go as far as the help of man. And, in any case, we should still have been all together; that is the only thing I think of at present."

"Well, I'm glad there's a chance of your coming to your senses *some* day," said Mrs. Diamond with overt sarcasm, as she gathered herself up to go. "All I know is that I'm done with you."

"God will help me," said Mrs. Lipcott. However, it was with a sinking heart that she heard the door slam. Her pious utterance was no mere commonplace, but Mrs. Diamond was half her living. And presently her trust in God was brilliantly justified, because the next moment Mrs. Diamond re-appeared in the doorway—quite a different Mrs. Diamond to the one of the red face and screech voice. This one said quite sweetly:

"By the way, Mrs. Lipcott, I've got some easy washing for you next Monday. A happy Sabbath to you."

"A happy Sabbath, ah! yes, a happy Sabbath!" murmured Mrs. Lipcott bitterly to herself.

CHAPTER VII

PHIL LIPCOTT knew that, however eventful his future life might be, it would contain no more definite landmark than the Friday on which he severed his connection with Narrow Alley. The intense excitement of the day, far from throwing his feelings into chaos, only tended to heighten his powers of perception. Every heave of the carriage ran through him with the force of an electric shock. The sweet, gentle look of the "black" lady opposite him became a stare beneath which he writhed; and when Dulcie first broke the silence, once they had got under way, with the remark that "by rights he ought to sit with his back to the driver," even Mrs. Duveen's smiling reply "that it didn't matter this time," could not redeem Dulcie's words from being a vote of censure.

"Don't look so sad," went on Mrs. Duveen playfully.

"Don't you think I ought to?" came Phil's quick reply.

That very moment he had succeeded in putting the right construction on the vague dissatisfaction which had possessed him all through; he felt like being kidnapped, and he wanted the "black" lady to know it.

Dulcie regarded him thoughtfully; then she delivered herself:

"I like you for saying that."

"Why?" asked Phil pointblank.

"I don't know," admitted Dulcie, without appear-

ing in the least abashed. Of course she didn't know; it would take her quite another six or seven years to find out truly the causes of things. But by that time she would know that what she liked in Phil, on this particular occasion, was his manner of answering—a manner which reminded her strongly of that of his brother, "the boy who shouted."

Mrs. Duveen, too, was not displeased at Phil's brusqueness. She understood the boy's irritation, and was, if anything, agreeably surprised to see it manifest itself; it showed he had the courage of his opinions. But at the same time she knew how far she herself was responsible for it, and so it was more in answer to herself that she said:

"At any rate, we shall try to make you very happy with us."

"Will you?" asked Phil with much wistfulness, and yet as much suspicion in his voice.

"Certainly; but you must help us a little." Phil sat up. What was coming? No doubt some onerous condition by which the "black" lady was going to give her game away. He tried to imagine how Leuw would have tackled this dangerous situation.

"Help you? Well, I'm not going to do anything hard," he said stubbornly.

"It isn't very hard. I only want you to trust me, that's all. Do you think your mother would have let you go with us if there were anything to be afraid of? Now, there's a good boy, trust me a little bit."

"I'm sure I wouldn't beg him so hard," cried Dulcie indignantly, "everybody trusts you—the butcher and the dressmaker and everybody; and Jane told the policeman yesterday she'd never had such a good

place in her life, and don't you think I was listening, because I never, *never* listen."

Mrs. Duveen put a gentle hand over the voluble little mouth.

"No, let Phil himself answer," she said patiently.

"About the trusting?" asked Phil, perhaps to gain time. Mrs. Duveen nodded.

"Well, I'll chance it; I can't say any fairer, can I?"

Mrs. Duveen laughed, but so as to make it obvious that her motive was pleasure and not amusement. She knew one is on the safe side in looking on children as sensitive plants.

"Aren't we near Edgware Road," asked Dulcie suddenly. "You know you said to Uncle Bram that. . ."

"Yes, yes—we shall be there presently," broke in Mrs. Duveen hastily. Phil pricked up his ears. Edgware Road? What was going to happen there? That wasn't the address to which he had sent his letter. Well, he had promised to trust them, and it would not be honest to break his word, even though nobody but himself knew anything about it. So, in order to save himself from further temptation in the matter, he determined to set his mind to the enjoyment of the drive. And in this he succeeded so well that the sudden stopping of the carriage woke him from a halcyon state that had almost made him torpid.

"Is this where you live?" he asked distractedly.

"Live!" exclaimed Dulcie with scorn. "Don't you see this is a tailor's shop?"

But their halting place was a good deal more than a tailor's shop; it was a large clothing emporium to which even the great Edgware Road could point with pride as a local achievement.

Mechanically Phil followed the other two in.

"A complete outfit for the young gentleman? Certainly, ma'am. Please step this way," said the obsequious shop-walker.

"Young gentleman! Who are you having a lark with?" was on the tip of Phil's tongue; but even his keenest scrutiny could detect no irony in the man's mien or manner. And presently he was being measured as carefully as if he were the first boy of his size who had ever wanted clothes.

"And you might let him put on the Eton things at once," said Mrs. Duveen to the shop-man at the end of a colloquy, from which Phil learnt, to his utter astonishment, that he was to be furnished with three suits, each for different wear.

Good gracious! he would have to spend all his time changing from one into the other.

"Certainly, ma'am; but we had better get the other things first," replied the shop-man.

Other things? What, were they going to buy the whole place up? At any rate, it was sampled pretty completely. Boots, three pairs, good strong lace-boots, patents, and slippers. Then hosiery, ever so many collars, ties, underwear, handkerchiefs. From the hat department came two caps, a "bowler" and—no, this was too much! What would Yellow Joe, what would all Narrow Alley say to Phil Lipcott in a chimney-pot hat? But, protest as much as he would, the inexorable shop-man dragged him before the man-high looking-glass to make him concede that it was a perfect fit. After that he was hurried off to a different room, where the same shop-man acted as his valet, and helped him into the "Eton things." Then there was more looking-glass. Phil almost

jumped with fright as he glanced at himself. So Leuw's prophecy about his developing into one of those short-coated, broad-collared swells had come absolutely true. When he returned, he was just in time to see Mrs. Duveen counting out nine shining sovereigns; and she only got three shillings change. Phil became suddenly convinced that the "black" lady was very much in earnest, because nine sovereigns, even minus the three shillings, was evidently too much to pay for a joke. All the way back to the carriage he pondered how to take the occasion. He wondered if he ought to make a speech; he would try. And then, almost in spite of himself, he touched the "black" lady's gloved hand with his—they were once more seated in the carriage—and said:

"Thank you, ma'am."

How grateful he was to the shop-man for teaching him that "ma'am."

Mrs. Duveen kept his hand in hers, and next did a quite unexpected thing; she bent forward, and before Phil could guess her intent, she had kissed him on the cheek. The following instant he was startled by a cry from Dulcie.

"Me, too, mamma!"

And without giving her mother time to do her bidding, Dulcie had flung her arms about Mrs. Duveen's neck, and was kissing her with half-frenzied passion. Mrs. Duveen patted her soothingly. But she was deeply grateful for the danger-light. What she held in her arms was not a child, but a little powder mine of love, into which she would have to be very careful not to drop the spark of jealousy, or God knew what the result would be.

"But you must not call me 'ma'am,'" she said turning smilingly to Phil, who was watching the incident with wide open eyes and mouth.

"And he isn't going to call you mamma: you're my mamma and nobody else's," ruled Dulcie, the melting grayness of whose eyes had hardened into a steel-blue glint.

Mrs. Duveen had an inspiration.

"Then perhaps you might suggest what he's to call me," she said deferentially.

The appeal to her authority had its effect on Dulcie. She looked at Phil, and her anger against him melted into pity.

Poor boy, he did not appear to be overburdened with the joys of life, and she was deliberately going to deprive him of a great chance of adding to them. But be that as it may, she was clear on one point: her mamma must be entirely her own, name and all.

"You may call her 'auntie' if you like; that's a sort of second-hand mother, you know," she said finally, and with an appearance of great generosity.

"That's splendid, Dulcie," said Mrs. Duveen joyfully; now that the question of style and title had been raised, she saw it was really one of great concern. "You won't mind 'auntie,' Phil, will you?"

"I'd rather make it 'aunt,'" replied Phil; "'auntie' sounds so—so babyish."

"Please yourself, by all means," laughed Mrs. Duveen in reply.

So a crisis was happily averted. Dulcie resumed her look of angelic imperturbability and her seat in the corner. But Phil could not help eyeing her from time to time with sidelong glances. It struck him that he

had taken her too much for granted. She was evidently a more complicated affair than that unruffled little face of hers led one to believe. But the thought did not trouble him long. He had more important business in hand; he fancied he was beginning to like this so-called aunt of his, and he wanted to make his fancy an accomplished fact before something came and interfered. And as nothing interfered, he made some headway with his task by the time the carriage came to a final pause.

"This is our house," pointed Dulcie with an emphasis on the "this" which was clearly intended to reprove him for the tailor-shop. Phil looked at the fine four-storied building. He did not at all like Dulcie's boastfulness. "Our house," indeed! He wondered how many rooms in it his new aunt occupied, and how many other tenants it contained. But he was not allowed to wonder long. Simultaneously both the front door and the area door opened, and out came two white-capped young women.

They helped the occupants of the carriage to alight, and then, at a word from Mrs. Duveen, they burdened themselves with the packages containing Phil's outfit. Phil caught them looking at him furtively, but he had no reason to feel annoyed at their curiosity, because it was visibly tempered with respect. He was, however, a little disconcerted that such well-dressed ladies should be made to carry parcels while he stood idle.

"Shall I help them?" he asked Mrs. Duveen in a half whisper.

"No, thank you, sir, we shall manage all right," came from one of the young women, who had apparently overheard him. This time Phil could hardly

restrain himself from laughing aloud. The stupid thing! If she only knew whom she was "sirring." Why, he was Philly Lipcott, who lived in Narrow Alley, and whose mother went out washing.

"Come in, dear," said Mrs. Duveen, touching him on the shoulder.

"You ain't paid the carriage man yet," Phil reminded her.

"We never pay John; he belongs to us, horse and all," he was informed by Dulcie. Phil was fairly staggered. He looked at Mrs. Duveen, but Mrs. Duveen only smiled at him. So it was true; his new aunt did not seem the sort of woman to smile when she heard her daughter telling an untruth. It appeared, then, that he had got into the hands of people who could ride in a carriage all day if they liked. Perhaps he had not made such a bad bargain after all.

A sudden suspicion struck him. He stopped Dulcie as she was about to set foot on the stone steps leading to the house, and pointing to the two parcel-carriers who were just disappearing in the area door-way, he whispered hurriedly:

"Who are those ladies?"

Dulcie respected his confidential tone, because she whispered back:

"They aren't ladies; the tall one is Betsy and the short one is Jane, and there's Mrs. Isaacs in the kitchen doing the cooking."

"And they all belong to you?"

"Not to me, but to mamma; and to me, too, a little bit."

"Here, just a minute—do you keep lodgers?"

"Lodgers? What's that?"

Mrs. Duveen had preceded them into the hall, and was watching the two eager little faces with a smile of silent content; then she called:

"Come in, dearies; you can talk better inside."

Dulcie scrambled up, and Phil followed more leisurely. At last he was about to enter the house of mystery, and he might as well take his time about it. When he reached the top step, he felt a thrill—a thrill of joyful surprise. There, against the right of the door-frame, he saw the tin capsule containing the three-lettered name of God, which according to the Mosaic code should figure on the door-post of every Jewish home. He had known, of course, all along that Mrs. Duveen was of the same faith as he. But the sight of the "Mezuzah," was to him a guarantee of kinship which all her kindness had failed to put into his heart. However much they had been strangers, however much divided by wealth and social standing, here was the common bond which neither of them denied. For the first time in his life Phil caught the meaning of the great ordinance: God's people were to testify to him thus publicly, in order that by their testimony they should make known to one another their everlasting brotherhood.

And Phil entered the house of mystery, but his fear did not cross the threshold with him.

CHAPTER VIII

FIVE minutes later Phil was in his room, watching Jane open the parcels and bestow them in wardrobe and cupboard.

"You'd better be washing, sir—they're waiting tea for you," she said after a while.

"Oh, yes—of course," stammered Phil meaninglessly. He took off his coat, and went to the washstand. In the bowl lay a cake of soap smelling like spice and looking like a piece of sculpture. What a pity it was to spoil it by putting it into the water. He thought of the toilet arrangements at home—the pump down in the open court, with the shouting, scrambling crowd of boys and girls, each struggling to get his or her turn before the other, and the sarcastic cries of:

"That's enough—you ain't bought the pump, have you?" or "You've only got one face, don't rub it off." And in the summer, when the water famine was on, you had to run about the neighborhood, and beg for a canful from people who could afford to have a tap in their kitchen; and you didn't always get it, because they were short themselves. This was very much better. And Phil washed and washed, feeling that he had to scour himself of the accumulated dirt of ages; or, as Jane put it, in reporting on the matter to her mistress afterwards—

"Lawks, ma'am, he just went for that soap and water like as he wasn't going to have another sluish so long as he lived."

He had just finished touching up his hair when Mrs. Duveen entered to fetch him.

"In case you didn't find your way," she explained.

As Phil followed her, he thought the possibility of that was considerable. Rooms, rooms everywhere. And everything was so astonishingly still. What had become of his feet? He missed the familiar clatter they had made on the Narrow Alley staircase; and besides he seemed floating in air. He was quite relieved that it was only the carpet which gave him the uncanny feeling. The carpet was another thing to which he would have to get used.

Mrs. Duveen opened a door, to be met by Dulcie's rather sulky:

"Well, you *have* been a time, and I want my tea *so*."

"But, my dear, I had to see about Phil, hadn't I?" replied Mrs. Duveen.

"Of course, you had to see about Phil."

Mrs. Duveen sat down to the table, resolving to look into this matter later on. She handed Dulcie and Phil their cups. Phil took his dumbfounded. They called this tea. Why, it was a school treat. Cake on an ordinary Friday afternoon? Only once every twelvemonth his mother laid in a reasonable supply of cake—on the New Year's Day, on which it is policy to eat sweet things, so that the coming year may be sweet and pleasant to you. How he and Leuw had cut into those slices of honey-bread! Once Leuw even swallowed the bake-paper that stuck to the bottom, and didn't feel hungry any more for the rest of the day. Phil felt a kind of pity for the honey-bread. True, it had tried hard to make him happy for ten

minutes every year, but if it only knew what a poor thing it was compared with. . . .

"I like Fridays," announced Dulcie suddenly.

"Do you?" asked Phil absently, capturing an escaped raisin.

"Because I may stay up longer in the evening." Mrs. Duveen assumed an air of reproof.

"You shouldn't say that, Dulcie; surely that is not the only reason why you should love the Sabbath Eve."

"But, mamma," expostulated Dulcie, "I'm only small, and I haven't got room in me to love it for more than one reason at a time."

Mrs. Duveen did not know whether to laugh or to look grave; but she was saved the trouble of making up her mind by the opening of a door and the appearing of a big pleasant-faced man.

"Uncle Bram," shouted Dulcie gleefully, as she romped up to him, and dragged him into the room by both hands.

The big man tried desperately to give himself the most forbidding look and voice.

"Young lady, are you aware that I haven't yet said 'good afternoon'?" he growled.

"O, never mind; you can say it twice next time," replied Dulcie flippantly; she was used to Uncle Bram's playing at "bogy." Then, standing on tip-toe, she whispered with a jerk of her head at Phil:

"We've brought him."

"Come over here, Bram," called Mrs. Duveen. "I want to introduce you. Phil, dear, this is my brother. I hope you will like him."

"Glad to know you, Master Phil," said the big

man, cordially, stretching out his hand to Phil, who grasped it clumsily.

"Hope you're getting on all right," replied Phil, according to the formula of Narrow Alley.

"First rate, my boy, first rate," laughed Uncle Bram, tickled by the queerness of it. Then he caught his sister's look of enquiry.

"I don't see the resemblance you speak of," he replied in an undertone, "but otherwise first impression distinctly pleasing. You know, at best it was a leap in the dark."

"I don't think I've made a mistake, though, Bram."

"Remains to be seen, my dear, remains to be seen."

"What is he to call you, Uncle Bram or Mr. Alexander?" queried Dulcie.

"If he's good, Uncle Bram; if he isn't, he mustn't speak to me at all. Do you hear that, Master Phil?" threatened the big man jocularly.

"Oh, I'll be good right enough; but it isn't always your fault when you're bad," returned Phil, facing him firmly.

Uncle Bram looked a little astonished. "H'm, there's something in that; I'll keep it in mind," he said finally, smiling at Mrs. Duveen.

After that Dulcie monopolized the talk. It was quite two days since she had seen her uncle, and there was a whole budget of news: The reckless behavior of the kitten in slipping out on to the pavement, the poor old doll which would surely have gone into a decline if Jane hadn't quickly patched up the hole where the sawdust leaked, and so on.

Phil listened interested in spite of himself. It was rather a novelty to hear people make a fuss about

trifles of that sort; in the part of the world where he came from, little girls chiefly worried about feeling cold or hungry, or father being out of work, or mother in hospital. But he became a little uncomfortable, and was sorry Mrs. Duveen had left the room, when Dulcie went on to her visit eastward. Spitalfields might be fun to her, but to him it was grim earnest, and he did not want it joked about. However, Dulcie did not tread on any of his corns, though there seemed precious little point about her concluding remark:

"He's got a brother, you know."

"That's not very terrible," joked Uncle Bram. "I know a lot of boys who have. Still, what about his brother? Out with it."

"Oh—well—oh, nothing particular," said Dulcie, floundering hopelessly.

Mrs. Duveen re-entered the room. "I think we had better have Service at once, Bram; I daresay Phil is tired," she said.

"Just as you please, my dear."

"Oh, yes, let's have Service," said Dulcie delighted. "You see," she informed Phil, "Uncle Bram always says prayers with us Friday nights because he's a—a—what is it you are, Uncle Bram?"

"Now, then, I won't have you tell everybody I'm only a bachelor."

"You shouldn't be one, if it's wrong," said Dulcie sternly. "And mamma, you know—it's all right, she can't hear; she's gone to fetch the candlesticks—mamma never goes to synagogue, because she can't bear to see that red ugly man sitting where papa used to sit."

Mrs. Duveen returned with two candlesticks of mas-

sive silver. The sight of them awoke no strong admiration in Phil. His mother, too, had a pair of Sabbath candlesticks; true, the silver coat on them was a little threadbare, but a special glory attached to them in being the only household movable which had never known the defiling scrutiny of the pawnbroker. And though Mrs. Duveen's might claim more "ounces," they could hardly pretend to be the embodiment of much heroic self-denial. He had to confess, however, that her manner of kindling the Sabbath lights was quite as impressive as his mother's. Of course, she did not spread out her hands over the candles, and then clap them to her eyes as his mother did; but she just pulled herself up to her full height, looking very stately, as befitted one who was welcoming in a royal visitor—the Princess Sabbath, as the phrase of the Jewish poet goes. And the words of the benediction fell from her lips so clearly and distinctly that even the two flame-tongues stood up steady and erect as though they knew what a great honor had been allotted to them. And when, presently, Jane came in and lit the three gas-jets, there seemed to be no perceptible increase in the illumination of the room.

Immediately Jane had left the room, Uncle Bram took on himself the duty of Precentor. His rich, sonorous voice, which somehow showed that he had a heart as well as lungs, fitted him for it admirably. And there was no scamping; he began from the very beginning of the Service: "Oh, come, let us exult before the Lord: let us shout for joy to the Rock of our Salvation," he read. And his congregation responded reverently: "Let us come before His pres-

ence with thanksgiving; let us shout unto Him with psalms.' And though Phil felt a little out of it when they came to the traditional chants which he did not know, he enjoyed it tremendously. Everything was so quiet and tender and full of loving humility. It was all so different to the hubbub and gabble-gabble of the little prayer-house which he and Leuw used to attend, where everybody was shouting at the top of his voice as though to compel God to listen to him rather than to his neighbor. Surely, this was a much safer way of sending one's prayers to their proper address.

And then Dulcie came in for her turn; one could see she had been awaiting it eagerly. Phil received quite a shock to hear the familiar English accents break in on the old Bible tongue.

"And the heaven and the earth were finished and all their host," read Dulcie with a fluency and flawlessness evidently due to considerable practice. Phil traced her every syllable with rapt attention. The refined prettiness of her speech struck him forcibly. He became painfully conscious of his own shortcomings in that respect, and resolved to remedy them: here he was safe against Yellow Joe's ridicule at his attempts to "talk grammar." A deep sense of gratitude, of conciliation, stole into his heart, making it very soft towards the little fury as she had appeared to him during the carriage incident. And when she finished up:

"May the service of Thy People, Israel, be ever acceptable unto Thee," he thought how greatly forbearing he had been in not grumbling with God for having refused to give him a sister.

After that the service soon came to an end. It was followed by mutual wishes for a "Good Sabbath," with handshakes and kissing. Phil came in for his share of the last from Mrs. Duveen and Dulcie. He took it quite easily; it seemed to him part of God's worship.

"Dear me, I feel quite hungry," said Uncle Bram, recalling them to things earthly.

"Jane has laid supper in the dining-room; we can start at once," said Mrs. Duveen, leading the way out into the room on the opposite side of the hall.

"Why, there seems quite a lot of us to-night," cried Dulcie as they took their seats.

"Phil, you ought to feel flattered to know you make so much difference," laughed Uncle Bram.

But Phil felt neither flattered nor anything else. His capacity for wonderment had been strained to its utmost pitch to-day, and now refused to act any further. He had become callous—one might almost say *blasé*. And so he took everything in matter-of-fact style, the glittering table accoutrement, the plentiful supper, the serviette, which last seemed to him a purposeless waste when people had coat sleeves. Of course he mixed up everything, used the meat fork for the fish, and scooped up the gravy with the pudding-spoon. Dulcie, horrified at these atrocities, looked at her mother for permission to interfere; Mrs. Duveen, however, firmly signaled an injunction to silence.

"Wants licking into shape," whispered Uncle Bram to his sister.

"Of course he does; knowing where he comes from, did you expect to find him ready-made?" smiled Mrs. Duveen, with equal caution of tone.

So the supper passed off without any contretemps, if one is to omit Phil's upsetting the pickle jar, which made him consider the advisability of offering to pay for the washing of the table-cloth. And then Uncle Bram said grace, and Dulcie chimed in again at the end with a quaint little thanksgiving of her own. She said it very slowly, with a beseeching look at her mother. But even that did not keep off the inevitable.

"Now, Dulcie, half past eight," said Mrs. Duveen significantly.

"Shall I ring for Betsy?" asked Dulcie with touching resignation.

"No, I shall see you to bed myself to-night."

"Oh, mamma!" cried Dulcie, clapping her hands. It was a very unusual privilege.

"Bram, you will look after Phil for a little while."

Then Dulcie said good night, and followed her mother out.

She found the latter strangely silent all the way up to the bedroom.

"What are you thinking of, mother?" she asked, when there.

"I am very sorry, Dulcie, but I have to scold you."

"Scold me, mamma? Why, what about?" The little mouth quivered.

"You spoke rather crossly to me before."

"Crossly, mamma? When?" The wide open eyes filled.

"When I fetched Phil down from his room. I don't mind so much being hurt myself, but it must have made him feel very uncomfortable. I only want to tell you to be more careful in future."

Dulcie's chest heaved pitifully once or twice, and then came the torrent of tears and words.

"Oh, mamma, I knew it was wrong at the time, and I had made up my mind to beg your pardon, and I forgot because I was enjoying myself so much. But I was sitting by myself, and all at once I felt so lonely, and I haven't anybody in the world to love me but you, and now you are beginning to get fond of Phil, and I didn't know what was going to happen, and I didn't care what I did to myself or anybody else. . . ."

The torrent of words disappeared, swallowed up in the other torrent. Mrs. Duveen stood speechless. "I haven't any body in the world to love me but you." Ah, that was a plea which ought to sweep away whole mountains of offense. How grossly unjust she had been to her child; she had cruelly, nay, almost maliciously, misinterpreted a sacred sentiment into an act of ill-temper. For that she owed her a great reparation.

"Dulcie!" and the next moment mother and daughter were in each other's arms, almost choking back their tears by the closeness of the embrace.

"And you will never love anyone as much as me, mamma?"

"Never, never, dearie."

"Not half as much?"

"Not a quarter."

"And we'll both try very hard to be kind to Phil, won't we?"

And then, with but little suasion, the dark curled head was coaxed on to its pillow, and the dark dreamy eyes looked up with a wonderful sheen in them. Can there be a greater happiness than to fall asleep with your guardian angel watching smilingly by your bedside?

Downstairs, meantime the proceedings were of a more matter-of-fact nature.

"Well, have you made up your mind what you are going to be?" asked Uncle Bram of Phil, when they were alone.

"No, not yet."

"Oh! Most boys your age have some idea of what they would like to be."

"There's a lot of things I'd like to be. Only I'm waiting to see what I'm most fit for."

"H'm. But what are you going to do while you're waiting?"

"Learn as hard as I can."

"Study is what you mean, I suppose. Think you're good at it?"

Phil paused a moment. "You'll fancy I'm bragging."

"Nonsense. If you hide your light under a bushel, it may go out. Well?"

"I was monitor in every class I was in, and I never got less than two prizes a year, and once the Inspector patted me on the head."

"That's a good record certainly. Still, education doesn't pay nowadays. If you'll take my advice you'll go into business and be rich."

"I don't want to be rich. My brother Leuw does. I want to learn Latin and pass examinations. I've always wanted to," Phil reiterated doggedly.

"And suppose my sister refuses to send you to school."

"She mustn't," broke from Phil; "it's against the agreement."

"What agreement?"

‘The one I made before coming here. Ask her to show it to you.’

Uncle Bram struggled with his laughter. “So you made your conditions in advance? Well, I must admire your prudence. Still, what if she refuses after all?”

“Then I’ll go back home.”

“You wouldn’t find the way,” quizzed Uncle Bram.

“Oh, yes, I would. I noticed there’s a ’bus going from the corner right down to the Bank, and I’d run behind it. I shall be all right at the Bank.”

“Under those circumstances,” Uncle Bram pretended to reflect, “we had better see what we can do for you.”

Phil silently tapped the floor with his heel; then he said bitterly:

“I knew how it would be. First she spends all those sovereigns in the shop this afternoon, and now there’s nothing left to pay the school money. But it’s in the agreement.”

Here Uncle Bram threw himself back in his arm-chair, and unmistakably guffawed.

Phil stared very hard to see the tears streaming down the big man’s cheeks.

“Call yourself clever,” gurgled Uncle Bram, “and don’t see that it’s all my—what d’you call it down your way—my blarney?”

“What’s the matter, Bram?” asked Mrs. Duveen, entering suddenly.

Her brother told the joke, and though just a trifle annoyed, Mrs. Duveen could not help smiling.

“Don’t you believe him,” she re-assured Phil; “he’s a wicked tease.”

But Phil was satisfied with nothing short of a direct statement.

"You'll send me to school, though—Aunt?"

"Of course, as much as ever you like."

"In that case," said Phil with the air of a conqueror, "I'll go to bed."

And he went, after the usual formulas. Jane accompanied him as far as his door, though he would much rather have dispensed with her escort. Now that he was going to stay in this house for some time, the sooner he mastered its geography for himself the better. He disliked being shown things by other people; he far preferred finding them out "on his own." There was more sport about it, and he was feeling quite jaunty just now.

Slowly he undressed. Another novel experience was awaiting him: for the first time in his life he was going to sleep alone in a bed. And that brought his mind to his old bedfellow, to Leuw, who in turn led on to his mother. Did that mean that he had neglected them all the evening? No, he could not reproach himself. Though the last few hours had been full of crowding emotions, they had at the bottom of them a great hollow, an instinctive emptiness. That hollow was his longing for his dear ones; and when one comes to think of it, the love which is most worth having is that which is the undertone of life rather than its melody.

"God bless mother, God bless Leuw." He thought the words, they were too sacred for utterance. And then came the spirit of youth, and carried him on Ariel wings to that most splendid of God's dwellings—the Palace of Dreams.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN Leuw awoke the following Monday morning, he was not dismayed at the feeling of responsibility that hung so heavy over him. He had anticipated the feeling, and the responsibility was of his own making, and it would have been stupid to be afraid of anything but what one cannot understand. Nevertheless, it was with more devoutness than ever that he fastened round his arm and head the phylacteries without which no Israelite above the age of thirteen may recite his morning prayer. The unfamiliar passages from the Psalms and the liturgy, through which he as a rule had to spell his way painfully, this morning came smoothly off his tongue; he had finished when, according to his reckoning, he ought only to have been half-way. He was pleased; it seemed quite natural that the readier utterance would meet with readier acceptance.

For this was the day whereon Leuw Lipcott had resolved to begin his struggle with the world. His plan of campaign was made up; the sinews of war were represented by the two shillings and three half-pence which he had earned by his porter's work the preceding days. Had these been his only resources, he might well have felt doubtful of the issue. But he knew that in addition he had a vast and inexhaustible capital, from which he could help himself whenever occasion demanded. That capital was himself.

His mother had been up since quite early that morn-

ing. But instead of betaking herself to Mrs. Diamond to begin her task, she fidgeted about the room in a make-believe busy way, which was only too obvious. Leuw wondered at it, but a ray of intelligence broke on him when he saw her hurry downstairs at the sound of the postman's knock. Why, of course—there should be a letter from Phil; Leuw had forgotten that, had almost forgotten Phil himself in the anxious scheming and dreaming to which he had given up his mind for the past two days. But he did not feel sorry for it; the sudden reminder thus conveyed to him would act as an additional mnemonic. It seemed to him that henceforth every postman's knock would come as a greeting from his brother Phil.

Phil's letter was short. To Leuw's ears it sounded as though a weight of awe and wonder had lain upon the writer, and would not let him speak out; but such as the letter was, it informed them of his well-being, and contained assurances of his undying affection. The envelope, however, contained something besides Phil's communication. Leuw opened the neatly folded little note, read it and put it in his pocket.

"What does he say there?" asked Mrs. Lipcott, anxiously.

"It ain't from him—it's from her."

"Her?"

"The little girl—only some silly rot!"

Mrs. Lipcott did not enquire further, first, because if Leuw did not volunteer information, it was no use enquiring, and secondly, because she knew as much as she wanted to know—that Phil was well and thinking of her.

Now she could go to her work.

"I suppose you won't be doing anything particular to-day," she hazarded.

"I might—I might not," was Leuw's enigmatic answer.

"There's a bit of fish left over, you know."

"And you're going to have it for breakfast presently. It's time you ate something since Friday."

"Don't be foolish, Leuw."

The wrangle did not last long; as usual Leuw gained his point. But Mrs. Lipcott ate with a strange feeling of sacrilege; for this hard, dry haddock tail seemed to her nothing but the incarnation of her child's love for her, and love was meant to be food of the soul and not of the body.

Leuw remained motionless for fully five minutes after his mother's departure. He was taking the earliest opportunity of thinking over the exact import of what, at the pinch of the moment, he had styled "silly rot." And presently he came to the conclusion that he had spoken very much in haste. He took the note from his pocket to see if he had read it aright. Yes, there it said plainly:

"I'm sorry I made you hold my hand the other day when you did not want to. Your truly Dulcie Duveen."

It certainly did not seem silly now; the silliness perhaps consisted in his letting the few words give him such delight. Well, even if it did, he did not care. It was so pleasant to know that he was being remembered, to know that somebody who was not in duty bound to do so, as were Phil and his mother, thought of him when there were many more acceptable things to think about. Somehow it made the world seem not

so desolately, hopelessly large—it made him feel a good deal less solitary. And all that he owed to the little note.

Furtively he looked round him. The gleaming copper kettle blinked at him knowingly. With a defiant glance at it, Leuw pressed the scrap of paper to his lips, and thrust it back into his pocket. That's what people did in the story-books, and Leuw did not always insist on being his own tradition.

Then he got back to his workaday mood. He went to the cupboard, and from the quartern loaf therein he cut four slices of tolerable thickness, and wrapped them in an old sugar-bag. They would be enough to last him till supper, which was supposed to make good, more or less, the shortcomings of breakfast, dinner, and tea.

When Leuw finally got out into the street, it seemed to him that the day had already made considerable progress. A glance at the nearest shop clock, however, told it was only a quarter to nine. A second glance showed him Yellow Joe bearing down on him to the detriment of everything that did not happen to be his size.

"Well, you are good-uns at keeping things dark," he began.

"Eh?" asked Leuw nonchalantly.

"About Phil, you know," was Joe's explanation.

"Yes, we did keep it rather dark, didn't we?" said Leuw calmly.

This frank admission of his guilt rather staggered his accuser; the latter, however, was not inclined to let Leuw off so easily.

"I know, too, why you did," he asserted.

"Oh, indeed?"

"Yes, indeed. You was afraid that if you let out, somebody else would try to jump into Phil's place."

"Take you long to find that out?" asked Leuw looking straight at him.

"It's the truth, anyhow," insisted Joe, sheepishly.

"And how d'you feel telling the truth?"

"Now, then, cheeky, mind yourself," threatened Joe, being stung by the taunt into the sudden recollection that he was Leuw's senior by two years.

"I'm going to; don't you fret. Want to know anything else? Because if you do, you'd better hurry up—haven't got any time."

"Why, where are you off to?" asked Joe inquisitively.

"To find some people that don't poke their nose into other people's business."

"Here, don't get so chippy over it. What I do is nothing to what other chaps do, sneaking round to worm things out of you and all that."

"Whom d'you mean?"

"This same brother of your'n. The other day he meets me and asks if I knew any swells, and I says 'yes,' and what they was like, and I says, 'good enough at a distance,' and all the while he had made up his mind to go and live with 'em. Nice to kid a pal like that—ain't it?"

"What! Phil asked you about the toffs?" enquired Leuw with affected asperity.

"He did," replied Joe, joyfully, at the thought that he had reaped ample revenge in having made a Cain and Abel out of the two brothers; "he did; ask him yourself."

"Good luck to him, too; shows he's got his wits about him."

"Had again, by Jingo," growled Joe, punching himself violently in the chest. By the time he had recovered his equilibrium, Leuw was walking off. But that was not how Yellow Joe wanted the incident to end.

"Hi," he shouted.

"What's up now?" asked Leuw, looking back crossly.

"Oh, that's right; get into a temper with a chap, because he's going to do you a good turn."

"D'you mean yourself? Then I beg your pardon."

Joe had his doubts about the sincerity of the apology, but otherwise he did not let it interfere with the workings of his evil mind.

"Dare say you're looking out for a job," he said.

"I am."

"Now listen. Know Little Hare Street?"

"Up Hackney way?"

"Right. Number 50. Man Sampson there—keeps tailor's workshop; wants a boy. His foreman lives in our place; that's how I come to know of it. Pound a week to start with; fancy, pound a week!"

"Fancy!" repeated Leuw, seemingly much impressed.

"Here's your chance. Tell the foreman I sent you, and you'll be all right."

"But why don't you go for it yourself?" Leuw thought fit to object.

"Because I'm better off where I am. Guv'nor promised to make me a partner soon as I'm grown enough to marry his daughter."

The reason seemed to convince Leuw.

"S'pose they're already suited though?" he remarked finally.

"Can't be; they're not going to advertise till to-morrow. Shouldn't advise you, though, to waste more time about it."

"Little Hare Street, number fifty?" asked Leuw, his foot poised ready for the start.

"Fifty or fifty-one—you can't miss it."

"Pound a week?"

"With five shillings rise every year."

Joe's heart leapt exultantly; already he saw Leuw off on his fool's errand, searching desperately for an imaginary workshop owned by a non-existing Mr. Sampson, who wanted a fictitious errand boy at a mythical pound a week. He pictured to himself Leuw, tired out with searching a whole street and heart-sick with disappointment, gradually awakening to the crushing fact that he had been ignominiously hoaxed. Oh, if he could only be there and see it all!

Yes, there he was off at last, that silly young Leuw, who thought himself so clever—why, bother him, here he was coming back again; no doubt more questions—and consequently more lies to be manufactured, grumbled Joe, who hated an unnecessary expenditure of energy.

"I almost forgot," said Leuw in an unfathomable sort of way.

"Forgot what?"

"Why here I was going off without thanking you kindly."

"Oh, never mind about that; only too pleased to help an old pal."

"Well, I can put you in for a good thing, too."

"Can you?" cried Joe eagerly.

Leuw thrust his face to Joe's so closely that their noses almost touched.

"Yes, the champion liar of the world's dead, and they want a new one. For particulars apply to Number fifty, Little Hare Street."

CHAPTER X

LEUW walked on, chuckling contentedly. In his ears still rang the yell of disgust wherewith Yellow Joe had fled—nay, it was more than flight; it was a rout, a stampede. Slight as the incident was, it pleased Leuw out of all proportion. On this, the most momentous day of his life so far as it had gone, it was only natural that he should try to forecast the future and construe even trivial things into augury of good or evil. He had reason to be hopeful. First there was that little missive which had flooded his soul with sunshine. Then there was Yellow Joe's discomfiture. Yellow Joe represented to him a malignant world doing its worst to lay him by the heels; well, it had evidently come off second best in the attempt. In any case, it impressed him strongly with the value of keeping one's eyes open. Oh! yes—he would keep his eyes open; he had made up his mind on that.

The very next moment he belied his resolution by running full tilt against a lamp-post. That wouldn't do at all. The time for dreaming was over. Dreaming was the privilege of children; it had never rightly belonged to him, because he never could remember himself as a child. Perhaps that was a pity, now that he came to think of it. Well, if it was, he would feel sorry for it some other time, when he had more leisure on his hands.

Quickly he crossed over Whitechapel High Street, and got into Brick Lane, one of East London's nar-

rowest arteries, but one pulsing feverishly with the hard-strained efforts of its thousands and thousands of toilers in the grim struggle for bread. From every quarter struck on Leuw's ear the maddening whirr of the machine-wheel, the sickening thump of the press-iron, the click of the nailer's hammer. He knew that the average space for each one of the workers was about four feet square—even less than would make a decent-sized grave—and yet there were more and more of them hurrying past him to the scene of their toil—men, women, children, teeming forth wantonly, as though the great city were bent on showing how much life it could afford to waste. Wasted life indeed! There it was visible in pale, wan faces, stoop-shouldered frames, and all the other tokens of premature decay. That was what the workshop did for them—the workshop, that wholesale assassin! It stunted their bodies, it blunted their souls; it crumbled their thoughts, and put that stony look into their eyes.

Leuw shuddered. Thank God, that was not going to be his lot; he thanked God for putting it into his mind to seek out for himself a less pernicious, a less deadly sphere for work. His workshop, at any rate for the present, was to be the free open sky, the wide spacious streets, where he need not stint his body for room nor his lungs for breath. One day, when he had become rich and his voice loud enough to be heard—he knew that there was no better sounding board than money—one day he would take this matter into his own hands. He would tell these people what he had heard that tall black-bearded gentleman say at the last prize-distribution: that there was really

no need for them all to huddle together in one place like a drove of frightened sheep; that they should space out more and not frantically crowd each other dead; that they were to get out of the beaten groove of their occupations—there were other things to be done in the world besides the making of coats and boots. And above all they were to take note that soap was cheap and cleanliness first cousin to godliness. Leuw remembered that speech, every word of it, simply because it was not the usual commonplaces about obedience to teachers and love for parents, but because it was meant to go right home to the parents themselves, and Leuw had enjoyed hearing the grown-up people get a scolding for once in a way. Now, however, he felt the truth of it all. Yes, as soon as he was rich, he would make it his business. . . .

He pulled himself up angrily; where was the sense of providing for other people when he himself needed all his own care and energy? Surely "charity begins at home" had often enough stared him in the face as a copy-book text. But he had no time to reproach himself. There, a couple of yards further on was his destination.

This proved to be a little shop receding modestly between its neighbors on either hand. The frontage of it was a window divided into four panes of solid-looking glass, each thickly puttied round the rim—the whole presenting an aspect of premeditated defense. And, indeed, the contents of this same window were all calculated to set the marauding instincts of any ill-regulated youngster on edge. Brandy-balls and creams alternated in artistic confusion with shuttle-cocks and woollen lambs, stick-jaw and almond-rock

with penny whistles and tin trumpets, while higher up gaudy paper covers announced that they contained inside them instalments of the entrancing histories of such evergreen heroes as "Broad Arrow Jack" and "Dick Turpin" or "Good Black Bess."

Leuw paused a moment outside to feel the two shillings and three half-pence reposing snugly in his waistcoat pocket and to adjust to his face an expression of unutterable business-likeness. Then he stepped in. The shop was empty, but in the tiny parlor behind Leuw could see an old man having his breakfast at a table from which he commanded a full view of his whole domain. At Leuw's entrance he leisurely wiped his grizzled moustache, rose somewhat stiffly, and came to the counter. His limping gait with its alternate thud-thud told the tale of a wooden leg.

"Well?" he asked, fixing Leuw with hard, shrewd eyes.

"I want to do business with you—in the wholesale," replied Leuw.

The old man looked at him more closely.

"How much for—thousand pounds?" he quizzed.

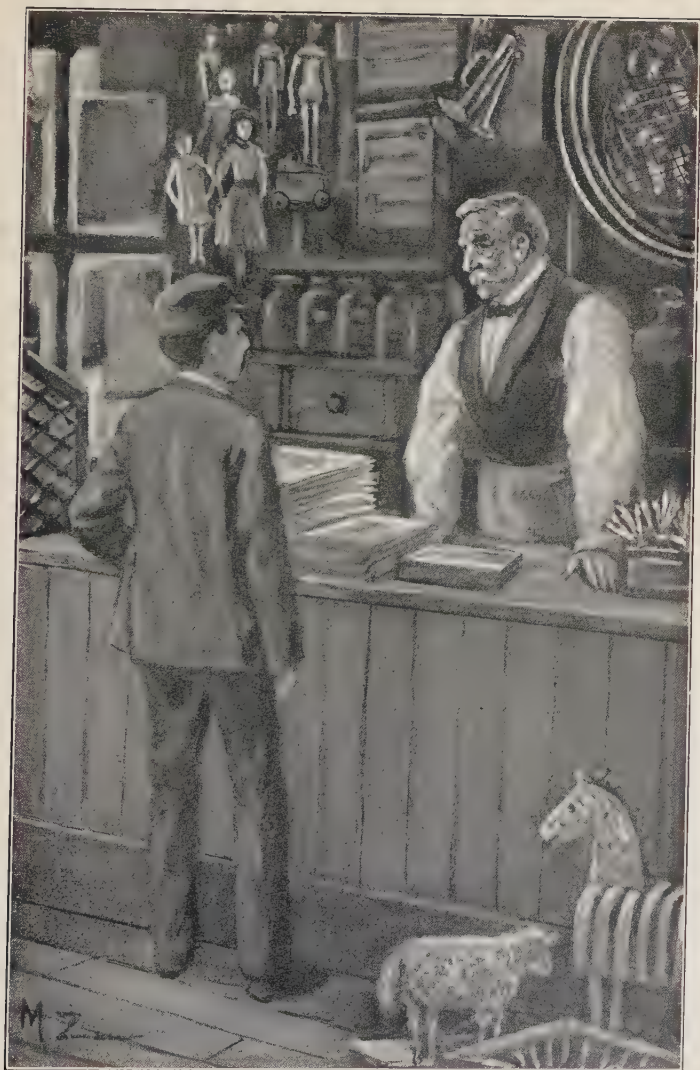
"Yes. I'll pay two shillings and three ha'-pence cash, and the rest you can let me have on credit."

The shrewd look in the man's eyes gave way to a twinkle which gradually extended over his whole face; then he threw back his head, and laughed till he nearly fell over, and had to sit down on the stool behind the counter.

"Well, I'm blest," he gurgled at last.

Leuw watched his merriment with displeasure.

"I ain't come here to be fooled about," he said gruffly.



"I WANT TO DO BUSINESS WITH YOU—IN THE WHOLESALE."

"Who's fooling you?" replied the old man, now quite serious. "I was only alaughin' at the sharp way you took me up. Thousand pounds? Why, you can buy up old Christopher Donaldson, shop, parlor, wooden leg and all for a twenty-pound note, and get some change out o' that."

"And I didn't mean any harm, either," said Leuw, a little ashamed of having given way to temper so easily.

"In that case, sonny, we'll start all over again, as if you'd only just come in. Good mornin'; what can I do for you?"

"I'm going to set up in toys, and I'll deal with you if you'll let me have things cheap."

"You're a bit young, ain't you?" said Christopher.

"Oh, I'll grow out of that. Will you let us have a penny article for three farthings? Mind you, I'm wholesale."

"Do you really mean it?" asked Christopher, who still seemed considerably puzzled by the whole transaction.

For answer, Leuw took all his available capital out of his pocket, and placed it on the counter; then he put his hands back into his pockets. The four six-pences and the three half-pence lay between him and Christopher without the least possible clue of determining their ownership.

"I told you how much I had," said Leuw, looking full at Christopher. The latter appeared to be turning something over in his mind.

"Anybody can see you're a bit green at the game," he said finally.

"How d'you mean?"

"What's to prevent me making a grab at this little lot"—he pointed to the coins—"and saying it's mine?"

"Nothing," replied Leuw calmly; "but you couldn't—not while I was looking at you."

"Yes, but I shouldn't advise you to try that too often."

"And for another thing," continued Leuw with the same equanimity, "seeing that I trust you, there's more chance of your trusting me."

"H'm. You're a Hebrew boy, ain't you?" asked Christopher after a little pause.

"And proud of it," replied Leuw, raising his voice half in defiance.

Christopher leaned forward and tapped him confidentially on the shoulder.

"And I don't blame you for it, neither," he said. "You can show up some grand men amongst you. Only to mention some in my real line—which same is the 'thin red line'—you've had Saul and David and the Mickybees and Sydney Mitchell that was the finest of 'em all."

"Sydney Mitchell? Never heard of him," said Leuw puzzled.

Christopher looked very cunning. "Of course you wouldn't have heard of him, because he wasn't Sydney Mitchell at all—he was Solly Myers."

"Ah!" exclaimed Leuw, beginning to understand.

"He told me all about it the night before Inker-man," went on Christopher pensively. "You see, me and him was together in the Seaforth Highlanders, and he had changed his name, because he didn't want the boys to ask him where Moses was when the light

went out; and that same night he had a feelin' as how he was booked, and he didn't want to go to God with a lie, and so he must let out to somebody."

"And was he killed?" asked Leuw in an awe-struck whisper.

"Killed dead. And I had a good deal to do with it. There I was layin', bleedin' to death, with my left shank all in splinters, and he says: 'Christopher, I don't like to see you gettin' so white about the gills,' and he ups me on his shoulder, and the moment he gets me to hospital, down he flops stone dead. And when they turns him over there was a five-inch long lance wound in his side. That's what a dirty rascal of a Cossack did for him while he was havin' his hands full of me, and couldn't defend himself. But he didn't let me drop, youngster; he didn't let me drop, not Sydney Mitchell. There's a Victoria Cross gone to waste, if ever there was. If I knew his address in heaven, I'd make the War Office send it on after him—see if I wouldn't." And Christopher shook his head threateningly.

"Perhaps it might go through the dead-letter office," suggested Leuw flippantly, in order to battle down the emotion which he felt was beginning to glisten in his eyes.

Christopher smiled sadly. "Yes, that's what made me take to your people," he continued; "only you seem more of a sort with him than any of you I've met." Here he reached out his hand—"Let's shake to the blessed memory of Syd Mitchell, or Sol Myers, or to whatever name he answers the roll-call up aloft."

Leuw complied, not a little surprised at the turn the conversation had taken; but even stronger than

his surprise was his pleasure at the compliment old Christopher had paid him.

"What makes you think I'm like him?" he asked.

"I don't know what, and I don't care what, but you can take your Davy on it that it's the nicest thing anybody's ever said to you. And for fear you should get conceited, we'll just quit the subject and come to business."

"Nothing I'd like better," said Leuw.

"Now you want these penny articles at three farthings; I'll let you have 'em at that, because I'm my own manufacturer, which the cost price of 'em is a ha'-penny; that just leaves a farthing profit for each of us, don't it?"

"That'll be fifty per cent for you and thirty-three for me," calculated Leuw.

"Well, if you think that sounds more, have it that way. Now, you just pick out the things you want. And while you're doing it, I'll look round in my lumber room for the tray I used to wear, before I'd saved up enough money to start this 'ere shop with. Come round this side of the counter if you like. Wait till I get out of it though; this stump of mine doesn't always go the way I want it to."

As Leuw watched him hobble back into the parlor, he thought it a fine opportunity to turn the tables on old Christopher.

"I say," he called after him. Christopher stopped and poked his head out from inside.

"What's to prevent me filling my pockets and being off before you know where you are?"

"Nothing, except that you know that I trust you," replied Christopher.

For a moment or two they looked very seriously at each other, and then they burst out laughing; and from the sound of their laughter an uninitiated listener would have fancied that they had known each other at least for a lifetime.

When Christopher returned, he brought with him a square green-painted board to which was attached an arrangement of shoulder straps.

"Here's your shop," he said. "I'm not going to charge you any rent for it neither."

"I'm very much obliged to you, I'm sure," said Leuw, who had only just come to see from what a difficulty Christopher's loan relieved him.

"Is this what you've picked out?" said Christopher, looking at Leuw's selection of toy pistols, pea-shooters, and mouth-organs. "Well, let me put them on. I know my way about it better than you."

But even with Christopher's practiced manipulation the portable bazaar could not be made to accommodate more than twenty-eight articles.

"Here's your change," said Christopher, handing him five pence.

"Half-penny too much," said Leuw counting.

"Oh, no. That's a half-penny discount for ready cash."

"Quite right. I ought to have asked for it myself," said Leuw, viewing the matter from a strictly commercial aspect. "I'll be off now. So long. See you later on."

"Here, wait a bit," cried Christopher; and stooping, he pulled out an old horseshoe; "just grab hold of that—for luck." Half laughing, Leuw reached out his hand; then he pulled it back with a sudden thought.

"I—I'd rather not," he said, looking frankly at Christopher.

"Why not? It's clean enough."

"It isn't that. I don't think our God would like it; it would almost be like worshipping the idols."

Christopher's arm drooped slowly, and presently the horseshoe fell to the floor with a dull clang; then he thumped the counter with his fist.

"You'll do, my boy," he exclaimed. "By Jingo, you'll do."

Leww nodded vaguely and walked out, wondering what there was in what he had said to make his new friend so emphatic in his commendation. But his wonder did not interfere much with his full consciousness of the epoch-making nature of his errand. Now, indeed, he had started in real earnest; he had hung out his sign, and was making his bid to the general public, or, at least, to that unsophisticated section of it which still thought the proper occupation of mankind was play.

He considered; it was only ten. That would leave him two hours to choose a good pitch. A good pitch was the main thing. Schools abounded within easy walking distance of where he was; but he would have to find one which was not provided with its own particular tuck and toy shop in the immediate neighborhood. He knew how conservative children were. So he searched patiently, with the happy result which is a proverbial reward of patience. The school in question turned out to be a foundation school, much to Leww's satisfaction, because its population was likely to be endowed with more available cash for luxuries than that of a mere Board School. It was

now within a few minutes of noon, and Leuw planted himself firmly against the railing opposite, because he knew what was coming. Then a bell shrilled inside, and the sound of it was followed by a vague confused noise as of thunder gathering in the distance; presently the doors opened, and an avalanche of tumultuous young vitality flung itself out, overswept the street, and surged on in a compact mass for a yard or two before scattering into its yelling components.

"Penny each—any article you like," sang out Leuw. For the first time in his life he regretted possessing an alto instead of a treble, which would have more chance of piercing the din. But such as his voice was, it succeeded in attracting immediate attention. Once more the old economic truth that a supply creates a demand was brilliantly vindicated. The penny which was intended for a feast of toffee-apples felt that it could not achieve a higher purpose than to convert itself into a mouth-organ. Besides, the "any article you like" sounded wonderfully seductive, suggesting, as it did, to the would-be purchasers an opportunity of choosing among all the products of the world. In addition, the youth of the merchant was a sure guarantee that they were not being cheated, which was more than they could expect in dealing with men of adult wickedness.

And so it was that within ten minutes from commencing actual business, Leuw was clean "sold out," and what was more, he could have disposed of twice as much, for the contagion had spread extensively.

"All right, gentlemen, I'll be here again when you come back," he consoled the disappointed ones. And he hurried off, gleefully chinking the pennies in his

pocket. The "gentlemen" he thought a particularly happy touch.

Old Christopher opened his eyes wide when he saw the empty tray.

"What, been robbed, or given them away?" he asked solicitously.

"Neither," replied Leuw, and out came the pennies, and with them the story of how they had been acquired. Christopher listened in silence, and then startled Leuw by calling himself a bad name.

"Strike me lucky, kiddy," he went on, "but you're worth a dozen old 'uns. Now what did I do? I stumped about the City and such like grown-up places where I wasn't wanted, waiting for a stray customer to come up, and waitin' a jolly long time very often. But you? You go hittin' the nail on the head right away and—well, all I can say is, you'll do, my boy—you'll do."

Meanwhile Leuw had been replenishing his stock, and started out again in high spirits. He got back to his pitch a good ten minutes before the recommencing of school. But a sore disappointment awaited him. This time there was no run on his goods; a reaction seemed to have set in. Leuw's cry: "Penny each—any article you like," fell on unheeding ears. Those who felt some inclination to purchase were held back by the thought that they would be able to obtain these penny articles—slightly damaged perhaps—for next to nothing when, in a day or two, their present owners would have become surfeited with the joy of possession.

Despondently he turned away as the burly school porter came out to shut the main entrance. The tray

in front of him had suddenly become quite heavy, and was dragging his head low down on his chest. But presently he drew himself up with such a jerk that the toy pistols and mouth-organs began to play at leap-frog. Where was his common sense that he should allow himself to become miserable over a trivial little incident like this? If he were to score success after success, he would be a millionaire before he knew what real honest work was; and there wouldn't be any fun in that. Indeed, his signal failure, following so closely upon his signal good fortune, was nothing but a timely warning of Providence that the worst error a man can fall into is to expect that things will go his way and to forget that there are ever so many people trying to make them go theirs. He would store that warning up in his heart, and thank Providence doubly for not making him the victim of a mistaken kindness.

Having thus regained his equanimity, it struck him all at once that he was hungry. That could be easily remedied. He wondered what sort of a dinner Phil was having. If Phil had a better dinner, Leuw had a better appetite; so they were quits. A neighboring cheese-shop tempted him in vain, not from stinginess, but because the knowledge that he could indulge himself served for the indulgence itself. A drink of water from the fountain down the next street, and he was ready once more against all odds.

He made his way towards Victoria Park where he knew—it would be hardly fair to tell whether from personal experience or not—the truants from the East End schools were wont to foregather. He was fairly lucky at the set-off, disposing of four articles to a

quartet of sinners, who were loyally helping one of their number to squander the savings of months in one riotous, reckless holiday. After that came on a lull, but Leuw had resolved to effect a clearance sale, and somehow the resolve seemed to guarantee the result. So it did, with the additional advantage that, by that time, Leuw was convinced he would not become a millionaire as prematurely as he had feared. He showed it pretty plainly when, about seven o'clock, he staggered into Christopher's shop to return the empty tray.

"Not quite found your street legs yet, eh, youngster? I was luckier than you; you see I only had to find one leg." And Christopher chuckled at his own grim jest.

Leuw made no answer, but leant heavily against the counter.

"What, as bad as all that?" said Christopher alarmed, raising the counter flap and pulling him through. "Here, come into the parlor, and I'll make you a cup of tea in two twos—a good strong cup. You must be more careful next time. You'll do, but you mustn't overdo."

Leuw followed him listlessly, and allowed himself to be set down in the wooden arm-chair. Christopher nimbly filled the kettle, placed it on the spirit lamp, and stood watching it, with occasional glances at Leuw; he, however, kept a persistent silence, as though he were afraid that, if he talked, the water would stop to listen instead of hurrying on to boiling point. It was not till he had emptied his cup to the bottom, and was taking his second that Leuw found strength to utter a word.

"It *was* stupid of me, wasn't it?" he said smiling shamefacedly.

"I wouldn't call it such a hard word as that," compromised Christopher. "That sort of thing happens to the best of us."

"Did it ever happen to Sol Myers?" asked Leuw.

"Bless you, yes; twice to my recollection he had to fall out and get into the ambulance, and your muscles are just pap to what his were. Once it was because he wouldn't have any supper the night before and no breakfast in the morning, and we were marching at the rate of three and a half miles an hour on to Balaklava, and all the nurses put together couldn't wheedle him into touching a drop or a morsel before nightfall. I've often wondered at it."

"What time of the year was it?" asked Leuw breathlessly.

"O, as far as I remember, somewhere about late autumn."

"Then I can tell you why," said Leuw with shining eyes.

"O, can you?" was Christopher's eager question.

"He was keeping the White Fast—the Day of Atonement, you know, when the Jews all over the world fast and pray to have their sins forgiven. Fancy, and Sol Myers didn't forget the White Fast!"

"Didn't I tell you he was a grand man?" said Christopher brimming over with enthusiasm. "I'm sure the reason he was called away so early was that God wanted him in His body-guard."

Leuw pondered over the remark, but the speaker's manifest sincerity redeemed it from the charge of irreverence. Then he got up.

"I ought to be going now; how much?"

"How much? What for?" asked Christopher.

"The tea, of course."

Old Christopher set his lips tight till his moustache positively bristled. At the same time he breathed like a choking grampus.

"Well, of all the impudence that ever took tea in another man's house," he exploded finally. But he quickly checked himself when he saw Leuw's look of terrified amazement.

"There, there, don't get so scared about it; it was only my fun," and he stroked Leuw's head with a hand that was as light as a feather.

"I didn't know how to take it," quavered Leuw.

"Take it that you've got the good heart and I the bad manners; but you'll know next time, eh?" There was some little anxiety in Christopher's voice.

Leuw was quick to notice it and to surmise its cause.

"The next time and every time after. I say, have you any chil—I mean have you anybody living with you here?"

"Nobody of my own, if that's what you want to know. Never had."

Leuw nodded; so he was right in his conjecture.

"I'll be coming in to-morrow morning," he said. "Good night."

"Good night; God bless you," replied Christopher, seeing him to the door.

And Leuw walked away with a feeling that, like Phil, he, too, had been adopted. This was the longest day he had yet lived through. The morning of it lay somewhere away in the dim past; the evening of it was

a distinct stride into the future. He knew the length of that stride; it measured exactly one shilling and three pence—a farthing on fifty-six articles sold and a penny discount on the two lots. But the actual profit—and it was good, considering the outlay—was not the main point. He had set up for himself a record; all he had to do in order to attain what he aimed at, was to go on breaking it. He ought to earn that week—counting Friday as a half-day, because the Sabbath set in early—somewhere about seven shillings. He might earn that as an apprentice, and the work would be easier. But he had intended no idle boast when he told Phil: “Leuw Lipcott and no Co.,” nor was it a mere motto of selfishness. He wanted his toil and the fruits of it for himself; his hungering, his weariness were to be in his own service. He wanted to be free, because freedom means self-respect, and self-respect means strength, and strength means victory.

His mother had come home before him; he was glad the lamp was burning so dimly, because he still felt rather white.

“Hullo, mother, had a hard job to-day?” he accosted her.

“Not very; I really believe she only asked me round to tell me what a great thing she had done for me; but she paid all right.”

“I suppose she can do what she likes for her money. And that reminds me.”

“Reminds you of what?”

“That from to-day you are to consider yourself my landlady.”

“Why, Leuw, what do you mean?”

"Only that I start paying for my board and lodging."

Mrs. Lipcott's incredulous smile turned to something quite different as Leuw told the day's history; and her hands, into which the borax had eaten sores, suddenly left off smarting.

"Leuw, why are you so good to me?" she asked at the end.

"Because Phil isn't here, and I've got to be good to you for the two of us."

Leuw was very tired, but he dared not fall asleep before he had given five minutes of pious thought to Solly Myers, to whom he owed his friendship with Christopher, and who was keeping the long White Fast under the Crimean snows.

CHAPTER XI

MR. ALEXANDER, or rather Uncle Bram—he was one of those men whom people are inclined to call uncle on the slightest provocation—took an early opportunity of submitting Phil's name for admission to the big Metropolitan Public School, which he himself had attended till entering his late father's stock-broking office. With undisguised satisfaction Phil received the tidings that he was to hold himself ready for the preliminary test, on which he was to be assigned his class, in three weeks from date. It seemed jolly—an examination right to begin with! They evidently meant business at that school.

And now that this important point had been settled, there was no obstacle to putting into effect Mrs. Duveen's hint to Phil's mother—the visit to the seaside. It was nearly two years since Mr. Duveen's death. When the first summer season came round, she had, despite the urgings of Uncle Bram and all her friends, refused to indulge in anything which might be construed into gratification of self; that was the least she owed to the memory of the departed. This summer she had given room to the intention, but had put it off far into the season, with the vague idea of avoiding the months during which her husband had defied the calls of the city, and had given her his company. Now, however, there was no further excuse. She owed the holiday to her little daughter and—she hardly dared acknowledge it to herself—her son's substitute.

Mrs. Duveen, in announcing the fact to Mrs. Lipcott, asked whether the latter preferred coming to St. John's Wood—with Leuw of course—to say good-by to Phil, or whether she herself was to bring Phil down to Narrow Alley. Mrs. Lipcott wrote in reply that she did not think either necessary, and that she hoped they would all enjoy themselves very much. Phil was not hurt; he understood. There had been enough heart-break in one leave-taking; why repeat the agony?

As for Leuw, he just scribbled:

"No time; got to be out all day." From which Phil inferred that Leuw had carried his threat into execution, and was fighting the world.

"Hope he'll win—hope he'll win," he kept muttering to himself, till Dulcie's astonished gaze confounded him into a full stop.

But Phil was not destined to go before seeing at least one old acquaintance. It was the morning fixed for their departure, when, half an hour before the carriage was appointed to take them to the station, Jane announced a visitor.

"A lady?" asked Mrs. Duveen rather uneasily. She did not want to be delayed.

"That's why I said somebody, ma'am," replied Jane; "I don't know if she's a woman or a lady; but she talks rather loud, and I said we were going off directly."

"Have you asked her name?"

"She wouldn't tell me; she didn't think you knew her."

"Well, show her in," said Mrs. Duveen resignedly. A second or two later and through the open door

in walked nobody less than Mrs. Diamond, clothed in the pick of her wardrobe and a halo of paste jewelry. She paused for a moment as though to gather impetus, and then, spreading out her arms, she swooped down like some ungainly bird on poor astonished Phil, and caught him in a rapturous embrace.

"Oh! you sweet pet, oh! you little dear, aren't you glad to see me?" she bubbled.

"Lemme go, Mrs. Diamond," gasped Phil, "you're crushing my collar."

His matter-of-fact reply seemed to reduce Mrs. Diamond to a more normal state of mind. She turned effusively to Mrs. Duveen, who had listened and looked in manifest surprise.

"I hope you don't mind me, Mrs. Duveen, but you know what it's like when your feelings get the better of you, and I'll just explain. . . ."

"I am afraid I haven't very much time now," interrupted Mrs. Duveen gently.

"Yes, I know you're on the jump to be off—you know what I mean—but I'll only keep you a tick or two," went on Mrs. Diamond, loosening her bonnet strings and plumping down in the nearest chair.

"Now, of course, in the first place I must tell you who I am, which is Mrs. Diamond, Mrs. Lazarus Diamond, and my mother—God bless her soul—was cook to the old Rabbi Aaron—God rest his soul—and he always used to say to her, 'Esther,' he used to say—but I must tell you about that another time, you understand what I mean. Now, for years and years I have always taken an interest in the Lipcotts, haven't I, Phil?"

"I s'pose so," said Phil, pulling his ruffled clothes straight.

"See?" cried Mrs. Diamond, turning his grudging admission into a full corroboration. "I'm not telling you any lies, God forbid; and, of course, you know that but for me you would never have got hold of Phil."

"No, I don't know," said Mrs. Duveen, astonished.

"What! you don't know? And I thought Mrs. Lipcott had told you all about it," said Mrs. Diamond, who knew perfectly well that Mrs. Lipcott hadn't, because she had questioned her on the subject that very morning. "Well, if it's anything I hate, it's to blow my own trumpet, but it's only fair to you that you should know the truth of the matter, in case somebody else should try to get something out of you on the strength of it—you understand what I mean."

And then Mrs. Diamond related for the fifty-second time the history of the Board of Guardians' letter which had wrought such epoch-making changes in the Lipcott household.

"And, of course," she concluded, "knowing that it's all my doing, I couldn't rest till I'd come and seen with my own eyes that dear little Phil was happy and well taken care of and all that sort of thing—you understand what I mean."

"I understand," said Mrs. Duveen stiffly, "but you might have guessed it."

"Certainly, certainly," admitted Mrs. Diamond, quick to see that she had made a mistake, "but when it's a case where the child had nearly been your own . . ."

"What's that?" broke in Mrs. Duveen.

"You see, me and Diamond have been a bit lonesome since we married our two girls off to the Prov-

inces—and very good matches they both made, bless 'em—and many a time I thought to myself: What if I took little Phil to live with us? You understand what I mean. Well, I'm very glad it turned out like it did."

Phil cheerfully agreed with her. He was pleased, too, to have been spared the knowledge of what Mother Diamond—as he and Leuw irreverently called her—intended with regard to him; thus he had been saved unnecessary tribulation of soul.

"Have you seen mother lately?" he asked.

"Saw her just before I came away; but I didn't tell her where I was off to, else, of course, she'd have sent her love."

"And Leuw—do you know what he's doing?"

"Who ever knew what Leuw was up to?" said Mrs. Diamond, evidently resenting Leuw's refusal to take her into his confidence; and then she went on, shaking her head ominously, "Ah! I am afraid Leuw—well, he's not like you, Phil."

"No, he's a good sight better," replied Phil promptly.

"There, isn't he a dear?" appealed Mrs. Diamond to Mrs. Duveen.

The latter smiled. She felt that she had not shown herself very cordial to her visitor, but that was because she had regarded her with a vague fear. She did not know what claim this woman with her overwhelming voice and manner might have on Phil; but Phil's own arm's-length attitude re-assured her completely.

"The carriage is waiting, ma'am," announced Jane.

"I hope you won't think me inhospitable, but I

should like to catch this train; it's so awkward to have your arrangements upset," said Mrs. Duveen pleasantly.

"Oh! yes, very awkward," assented Mrs. Diamond, rising reluctantly. "I know how I should feel about it myself. But, of course, now we've made friends, we'll see a good deal more of each other, I hope. It's so pleasant to come across somebody you can talk a sensible word to. And then, if you want any wrinkles about poor-visiting, I'm the party for you. Only the last time I was talking to Lady Simmondson—me and her Ladyship are great friends, you know; I suppose you've heard of her. . . ."

"We are first cousins," replied Mrs. Duveen quietly.

"Are you really?" cried Mrs. Diamond ecstatically. "Well, I was telling you, says her Ladyship: 'Mrs Diamond, there isn't a soul in London that knows better than you what the East End wants.' But then, of course, I am a bit of a public character—you understand what I mean. I am subscriber to three bread-meat-and-coal societies and president of the Inlying Charity of the Women of Bialostock, and the only lady on the committee of the new Free Dispensary, not to mention . . ."

"Ma'am, John says we haven't a moment to spare," broke in Jane. Mrs. Duveen made a resolute movement to the door.

"Well, I suppose I must go now," said Mrs. Diamond regretfully, "but as soon as you come back . . ."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Duveen hastily, without caring what she was pledging herself to by her affirmative.

Jane had snatched up the traveling satchels and hurried down, closely followed by Phil and Dulcie.

Mrs. Diamond kept abreast of Mrs. Duveen all the way down, determined to make the most of her chance and nearly taking her listener's breath away by her whirlwind-like utterance.

After the briefest possible leave-taking, which Mrs. Diamond tried hard to elevate into an occasion of great ceremony, the three gained the refuge of the carriage, and Mrs. Diamond was left standing on the curb wildly waving her handkerchief, though contrary to her firm expectation Mrs. Duveen's head did not appear through the window to note the salute.

"A bit stuck-up," she communed with herself, "and she might have asked me to come and see them off to the station."

But the disappointment was amply atoned for by the triumph of having added a "carriage lady" to her visiting list.

Probably, too, it was against etiquette to be asked to take a ride on the first occasion. Mrs. Diamond had only hazy notions of etiquette, but she put it somewhere on a level with the Ten Commandments. At any rate she would have given the price of a new bonnet, had her bosom friends, Mrs. Preager and Mrs. Tannenbaum, seen her come out of that lovely house. But they would hear all about it, see if they wouldn't. And they did. Sad to relate, however, Mrs. Diamond made it appear from her account that she had paid the call, not on her own initiative, but in response to a written invitation. Only that ass, Diamond, had gone and lit his pipe with the letter.

CHAPTER XII

MRS. DUVEEN had wisely refrained from the soul-racking anxiety which most people think it necessary to bestow on the choice of their summer resort. For more reasons than one she had gladly fallen in with the suggestion of her cousin, Mrs. Elkin, to join her in the little Devonshire coast-nook which was making its first attempts at being a seaside place.

All the way down in the train, Dulcie was jubilant at the prospect of meeting her crony, Effie Elkin, with whom she had had no chance of quarreling for quite two months. Phil sat silent and subdued, greedily feasting his eyes on the luxuriant greenness of foliage and meadow, and wondering how he could possibly make his mind still more receptive for the far greater glories which, on Dulcie's solemn assurance, would soon dawn on his dazzled vision.

"What's that?" he cried, sitting up suddenly, his nostrils quivering and widespread. A sense of something pungent had struck him, a delicious sense that was like nothing he had felt before, and tingled through him from head to foot and back again.

"You're not going to be seasick, are you?" jested Mrs. Duveen.

"Is that—is that the sea?" quavered Phil.

"Look through the other window," directed Mrs. Duveen smilingly.

Phil did as he was told and blinked. There, far across the meadow land, lay what appeared for all the

world a patch of molten sunlight, glinting away very soft and quiet as though it knew there was really no necessity to make itself look more beautiful than it did. No doubt it was conscious that it had to teach the world a lesson.

"Yes, there it is," whispered Phil, his hand brushing away the haze from his eyes.

"I wonder if Effie's as freckled as she was two years ago," said Dulcie in a matter-of-fact tone. And the spell was broken.

According to previous arrangement, Mrs. Elkin and Effie met them at the station—a pocket-edition of its kind. There were cordial greetings, and Phil was introduced. He wriggled beneath Effie's frankly inquisitive stare.

"Now, then, Tiny, you walk with the mummsies," said Effie, who, happening to be two months older than Dulcie, made despotic use of the accident.

"And what are you going to do?" asked Dulcie.

"Talk to this make-believe brother of yours. I want to see what he's like."

"Effie, don't be so fast!" remonstrated Dulcie.

"No, dear; no more than I can help."

"You're horrid! And I'm dying to know all about the place. Any niggers?"

"All in good time, Miss Paul Pry. Now just get behind."

Dulcie yielded sulkily. Phil, who was slowly sauntering on a pace or two in front, started to find the bold-eyed little girl at his side.

"What sort of a boy are you?" she asked.

Phil did not believe his ears, and favored her with a rather blunt:

" Eh? "

" Eh—eh," mimicked Effie, " too much trouble to say, ' I beg your pardon,' is it? "

" No, it isn't; only I couldn't find breath enough. You came so sudden."

" Well, as long as you're sorry. Dear me, and now I've got to ask you all over again, and it's so hot. What sort of . . . "

" Hadn't you better wait and find out for yourself? "

" I don't like waiting, it's so tiresome. And then it's much easier to make other people do things for me than do them myself."

" Well, suppose I don't tell you the truth? " fenced Phil.

" Oh! I'd soon find that out; and then I wouldn't speak to you again."

Phil was greatly embarrassed. The threat sounded genuine, and he could hardly be sure that his self-estimate would tally with the truth, because, as a matter of fact, it had never struck him to estimate himself.

" Well? " asked Effie, eyeing him relentlessly.

" I say, I wish you wouldn't bother me," replied Phil, goaded to desperation. He fully expected that the little inquisitor would toss her black glossy mane, and march off haughtily; but to his surprise—his agreeable surprise, by the way—he was mistaken.

" Well, it is rather an awkward question to ask," admitted Effie sweetly. " It's a bad habit I've got into. Mother always tells me so."

" Really? " asked Phil, putting much sympathy into his voice.

" I don't like the way you said that ' really; ' any-

body would think I had told you I had only got one lung like Jacky Smithers, next door to us."

"I didn't know it sounded like that," apologized Phil.

"Are you fond of the seaside?" queried Effie in a voice of unutterable boredom.

"I don't know yet; but I think I shall like it very much."

"You think? It's time you had made up your mind about it, I should say."

"You see I've never been to the seaside before," said Phil, as though owning to some vast crime.

Effie said nothing, but her eyes rested on Phil as on an inexplicable phenomenon.

"At least, father was once going to take us to Southend for the day, but he didn't have enough money. And then he died before it got summer again."

Effie grew still more mystified. "Didn't have enough money? Then why didn't he go to the bank and get some? That's what we always do."

"Father never belonged to any bank; he only used to make slippers."

"Oh! then you're quite poor people."

Phil drew himself up stiffly. "Oh! yes, we're quite poor people," he replied haughtily.

"And I suppose you live in the East End? Because that's where all the poor people live. I asked papa about it."

"Yes, we live in the East End," said Phil still more haughtily.

"Oh, you lucky boy!" exclaimed Effie.

"Go on chaffing as much as you like. Think I care?"

"But I'm not chaffing," protested Effie; "I'm quite serious. It must be splendid down there. Did you ever see the old Irish women sitting on the door-steps smoking pipes?"

"Saw them, many a time," said Phil.

"And don't the brass bands come round four times a day?"

"More than that, some days."

"And nobody says a word to you whether you wear a pinafore or not."

"Can't tell you about that, I'm sure."

"Of course you can't; you're only a boy. And the girls needn't put on gloves every time they go out."

"Oh, no!"

"See? I know all about it," cried Effie triumphantly. "Our Maria comes from there. It must be a fine place for getting into scrapes—isn't it?"

"I don't know. I never got into scrapes. I don't like it."

"I suppose you're a bit of a softie," hazarded Effie.

"Am I?" Phil turned on her sharply, but Effie did not flinch.

"Go on—hit me, if you like," she said defiantly.

"You're awfully flash, aren't you? You know I wouldn't."

"Well, come behind the hedge and nobody'll see."

"Oh! I'd do it here, if I wanted to."

"I know why you don't. You're frightened I'll scratch you back."

"I don't care what you'll do. I know what I won't do—get into a scrape."

Effie burst out laughing. "Oh! you are sharp. Don't you see? That's just what I was trying to make you do. It nearly came off, though, didn't it?"

Phil stopped short, taken aback by this instance of female duplicity; then, lest she should think the laugh was all on her side, he joined in with gusto.

"You see, I'm getting to know what sort of a boy you are, after all," boasted Effie.

"Yes, but you're doing all the work for it," retorted Phil.

Here Dulcie, who all the time had been consumed with curiosity about what was going on in front, came running up.

"What were you laughing at?" she enquired.

"Your snub nose," replied Effie promptly.

"'Tisn't true, Dulcie," said Phil equally promptly.

"But you know you have got a snub nose, Dulcie," said Effie unabashed.

"Oh, Effie! How can you say anything so untruthful? Yours is ever so much snubber."

"Now, Phil, you be umpire; whose is?" said Effie, appealing to Phil.

"Yours is, I'll lay any odds," was the unhesitating decision.

"Oh, thank you, Phil," cried Dulcie gratefully.

"It's no thanking job. If yours was, I'd say so just as soon. Ah!"

The exclamation was wrenched from him by the sudden bend of the path, which exposed in panorama the green shimmering hill-hollow wherein the little fishing-village nestled cosily. The bay in front of it was just one large good-humored smile, and sportive tiny wavelets leaped gleefully inland, as though to entice the demure cottages to come down and play with them.

Phil fancied he had all at once shrunk to the size

of a pin's head, he felt so small and subdued. In particular he repented not having had the courage to own up to his ignorance as to what a snub nose really was; and so there was a strong possibility that his decision against Effie was unjust. He did not want to decide against any one—justly or unjustly. He wanted to be at peace with everybody. But his most urgent desire was to pray. He knew that in the Daily Prayer Book is given the blessing one must utter at first sight of the ocean. He would have given all his new clothes if he could remember how it went. Then he became comforted; he felt his eyes were getting moist. The blessing could not have found a better substitute.

By this time the "mummsies" had come up, and stood watching him smilingly.

"You seem to be pleased, Phil," said Mrs. Duveen.

Phil started. "I never thought it would be like this," he said, flushing.

"Well, don't eat it up altogether, or you won't have any appetite for lunch," jested Mrs. Elkin.

Dulcie and Effie were racing down the hill, screaming with laughter, their hair and frocks flying like the sails of some strange craft. With a wild whoop Phil snatched off his straw hat, leapt two feet into the air, and bounded after them, his right forearm stiffly in front as if he were guiding the bridle of the wind. The joy of life had gripped him mightily.

"I am glad to see he is waking up," said Mrs. Duveen to Mrs. Elkin; "the first few days he went about as if he saw and heard nothing."

"Perhaps he was afraid of the waking up," suggested Mrs. Elkin. "In the places from which he comes it isn't good for people to feel very keenly."

"You mean he is beginning to trust his senses at last."

"Look at him," laughed Mrs. Elkin; "I certainly wouldn't take him for a sleep-walker."

At the foot of the hill there was a general reunion.

Dulcie and Effie were disputing who had won the race. Phil was again pressed into service as referee, and disposed of the question by saying that neither of them knew how to run, but if they were good girls he would teach them. For which offer Effie showed herself most grateful, and promised, as soon as she had time, to return his kindness by giving him a few hints on manners.

The cottage wherein the Duveen party was to quarter was twin and next-door neighbor to the Elkin's, and stood right facing what the natives vain-gloriously talked of as the "esplanade."

Lunch was awaiting them at Mrs. Elkin's. Everybody had second helpings—Phil thought he would require at least four or five when he started; he learned to his relief that this was due to no abnormal enlargement of his digestive organs but simply to the peculiar workings of the air. And curiously enough everybody talked of it in a way which ought to have made the air swell with conceit.

"Come on, get your pail and shovel," said Effie to Dulcie when the meal was over.

Dulcie obeyed readily. Phil wondered what the pails were for; for emptying the ocean they were obviously insufficient. He expressed this opinion to the girls in all good faith; and even in later days, the mere mention of it was enough to raise a laugh. Chap-fallen he followed them down to the beach. He

was little affected by Dulcie's ridicule; it was Effie's that told on him so severely. He could not make up his mind about her at all. But somehow he felt that he and she would either be the best of friends or mortal enemies. No half-way measure seemed possible. And that was why he struggled so hard against feeling angry with her; once he did that, it might be the thin end of the mortal-enemy wedge, and he didn't like the idea of it. Lazily he watched the two girls raising the pyramids of sand. He had brought with him "Treasure Island," but it lay beside him unopened. Sea and sky seemed ever so much better reading; he could almost feel his mind becoming full of knowledge, his heart of understanding.

"Mine's nicer," began the wrangle presently.

"No, mine; look, yours is all lopsided."

"You needn't ask me. I'm not going to say a word," declared Phil.

"And pray; who is going to ask you, Mr. Meddler?" said Effie.

"You were; you know you were."

Effie looked at Dulcie. "I suppose we were," she said at last.

"I suppose so too," said Dulcie.

"And I shouldn't advise you to quarrel so much. It'll make you ugly," said Phil.

"Will it?" cried both Effie and Dulcie in a breath.

"Well, that's what happened to the two girls in the story," said Phil.

"What story?" was, of course, the next question.

Phil thought a little, and then began a harrowing tale about a certain Sue and Sal, who, through saying nasty things to, and making wry faces at, each other,

grew so hideous to look at that they only had to enter a house, and all the milk turned to vinegar, and all the sugar to salt, and the best steel knives went rusty, and the purest gold became copper. At last their mothers turned them out, and, of course, nobody else would take them in, and they had to wander about through the rain and the darkness all by themselves. And just as they lay down to die, calling each other names all the while, up came a good fairy that happened to live near, and told them to poke out their tongues, and just touched the tips with her wand. Whereupon Sal and Sue immediately fell round each other's necks, and kissed each other, and Sal called Sue a darling, and Sue told Sal she was awfully sorry for having brought her to such a misfortune. And then they went back to their homes, but their mothers refused to let them in, saying they were impostors, because their daughters were ugly little vixens and not beautiful and well-spoken young ladies. So they went out again into the world, but they hadn't gone very far when they met two handsome young princes who fell in love with them, and took them to the king's palace and married them. And they all lived happily ever after.

"Where did you read that?" asked Effie, who had followed the narrative breathlessly.

"Nowhere," replied Phil. "It just came into my mind all at once."

The two girls looked at one another.

"Oh, Effie, isn't he clever?" said Dulcie.

"Can you make up any more?" asked Effie.

"I'll try," said Phil modestly; "I don't know if it will turn out any good, though."

"Never mind; you're only fishing for compliments," replied Effie.

"I say, Effie, don't you think we had better kiss first?" suggested Dulcie. "Jane would be so cross if she had to polish the knives all day."

"You stupid—don't you know it's only a fairy tale?" laughed Effie.

"Still, you know, it's best to be on the safe side."

"Well, perhaps you're right. Hold up. That's it; and another one."

"I wonder what mischief those little imps are hatching; look how quiet they are," said Mrs. Duveen to Mrs. Elkin.

The two were sitting in a tent, which had been fixed up in the strip of garden in front of the two cottages.

"For goodness' sake, don't break the spell; you know what Effie is," laughed the other.

In the end, however, they were obliged to take the initiative after all.

"What, tea-time already?" asked Effie incredulously of Jane, who had been dispatched to call them in.

"It's on the table, Miss," insisted Jane.

"I simply don't understand it," declared Effie; "do you?"

Dulcie didn't either. Phil did, but that was because he felt so dry and husky in the throat. Otherwise he was much more mystified than the other two put together. It was no strange thing to him to find all sorts of odd ideas crowding his brain. Many a time Yellow Joe had come across him standing at the street corner in a fit of abstraction, and had called him a sulky brute for refusing to gamble with him in but-

tons. And Phil had chuckled to himself to know that he was really having a very good time, while Yellow Joe thought him a hopeless victim of the dumps. But he had never tried to put his ideas into words, first because he had no listener, and secondly because it was best to let well alone; they mightn't sound as nice as they felt. This was his first attempt—a genuine success, as Effie's "I simply don't understand it" told clearly. Of course, the buoyant air, the soft-crooning sea, the caressing sunshine had a great deal to do with it, but somehow most of the credit belonged to Effie's dark eyes. They listened so hard, they fetched the words out of his mouth before he had time to know they were there.

"Mummsy, Phil can tell stories," shouted the owner of the black eyes excitedly.

Mrs. Elkin threw up her hands in mock horror. "I shouldn't have thought it of him."

"Not the way you mean, but all about fairies and castles, and you never know what's going to happen, can you, Dulcie?"

"There's the whole secret for you," said Mrs. Elkin to Mrs. Duveen.

"Did he tell them nicely?" smiled the latter.

"Splendid; all out of his own head, too."

"In that case we are all going to treat ourselves to a row after tea."

Phil was not prepared for the outburst of delight that followed. It did not make him proud so much as glad, glad that he had put Effie under an obligation so early in their acquaintance. She acknowledged it readily.

"You aren't a little softie," she informed him as they tramped down to the beach.

"I told you I wasn't," was his instant reply.

Phil had never been on the water before; but he did not give a thought to danger. Already he was learning to love this green, immeasurable mystery. He had got as far as pitying it; it looked so lonely. The brave smile that kept rippling its surface seemed nothing but a mask. The expedition was very uneventful as, of course, everybody, except Effie, wished it to be. Effie longed eagerly—she did so each time she went into a boat—for a storm to come on, "just to see what it felt like." She raised several false alarms in the hope of inciting an innocent flock of cloud down in the sky into taking her at her word; and at last despairing of that, she furnished the only incident of the voyage by wheedling the old boatman into letting her try an oar, and immediately turning a backward summersault over the thwart. Nobody laughed more heartily than she, although none of the others felt such a painful numbness in their left elbow. After that Phil asked to have a "go," and got on very creditably considering the circumstances. Effie listened with conflicting emotions to old Jobson's grunts of approval. She was glad to have come across Phil; he was so different to the other boys she knew—with the difference in his favor. But she hoped he wasn't very much cleverer than she, because if people praised him too hard, she might get jealous, and you can't be friends with people you are jealous of—bah! she was stupid. Old Jobson would have been flattered, had he known his grunts gave her so much food for reflection, and—here they were back again aground, and Phil helped her out before Dulcie, at which she was absurdly pleased. It was too early to go in to

supper, so they stopped on the beach, and Phil, with fascinated gaze, watched the miracle of the incoming tide, as myriads of boys have done before him, and will do after him. Effie and Dulcie treated it much less respectfully; they played "touch" with it, waiting till the landward wave had crept within an inch or two of them and then scampering off with shriek and squeal.

Phil almost felt inclined to read them a lecture, when Effie rushed up and shouted in his ear:

"Come on; you're missing all the fun. There, look at that wave—wasn't it spiteful?" At the same time she gripped him by the hand; and presently Phil—lecture and all—was joining in the game, and a tricky little breaker had sprung full in his face to the vast delight of his luckier playmates.

It was arranged that the two house parties should meal together at Mrs. Elkin's, and nine o'clock sharp had been fixed for curfew-time. Half an hour remained after supper, and Phil had just taken up his "Treasure Island" with diplomatic apologies to that grand old villain, John Silver, for neglecting him all day, when a sudden burst of music made him sit right up. Mrs. Elkin and Effie had seated themselves at the small-sized cottage piano, and were playing a duet, at least that was what Phil heard Mrs. Duveen call it. Old John Silver had to retire once more into the background.

Phil listened spell-bound to the quaint, plaintive composition—it was the work of some one whose name ended in "ski." There was a subtle note of fitness about it that accorded wonderfully with the spirit of the moment. The darkness peered in pathetically through the window, the complacent flapping of the

waves had turned to a long-drawn moan; and the sadness of it all was unutterably sweet.

Phil was back once more in the cobwebbed little Prayer House with its Old-World chants and its atmosphere of wistful resignation. His old life and the new seemed to have met and made a compromise; he was filled with a comforting sense of reconciliation. Of late, he had become something of a stranger to himself. He was Phil once more.

"How well I shall sleep to-night," he could not help murmuring.

The music ceased with a sustained monotone.

"Oh, Effie, how you have improved," cried Dulcie. "I wish I played half as well." Effie did not answer her, but cast a swift glance at Phil; he was staring at her with wide open eyes, but for all that he did not seem to see her.

"Well, when you've left off gaping," she said to him pettishly.

"I—I wasn't gaping," stammered Phil, dropping the book in his confusion.

"Now, then, chicks—off with you," commanded Mrs. Elkin.

Strange to say, none of the "chicks" raised a remonstrance, though time wasn't up by quite a quarter of an hour. Phil snatched a moment's tête-à-tête with Effie as she was replacing the music in the stand and whispered:

"You can sing ever so much better than I can tell stories!"

"Can I?" was the astonished reply. "Why, I never opened my mouth."

"Not with your mouth—with your fingers, you know. Good night."

Effie thought for a moment, then her face became radiant. She forgot to return his "good night." Phil refrained from glancing at the sea in his transit to next door; but he went and had a good look at it through his bedroom window, from behind a barricade, as it were. The tide was full and breaking against the rock-sprinkled beach. Phil's imagination at once construed the numberless white dots of surf into a million rebellious little spirits trying to clamber out of the dark and the wet into more comfortable quarters; but each time, just as they were about to succeed, an inexorable grasp dragged them back, and the sullen boom that followed was like an angry rebuke to their disobedience. Phil became frightened; perhaps the sea was angry with him, too. He remembered he had dared to pity it; he, the mean, human worm, had dared to pity the infinite and the eternal. It was like insulting God. And then, all at once, there came a lullaby, which, soft as it was, overbore the sullen boom, and hushed his fear to slumber. Effie's fingers were singing the lullaby. He was glad he had drunk in every note of it. Had he missed even a single quaver, it would not have done its work so effectually, and he would have gone to bed feeling that the perfectness of the day had been marred by one irreparable fault; and this could not have counted as a day of days for him. Now, however—yes, he slept very well that night.

Such was, more or less, the routine of their stay. About the middle of the third week a welcome diversion was occasioned by a surprise visit of Uncle Bram and Mr. Elkin, the latter a grave-faced, middle-aged gentleman who said very little and smoked a great deal.

"And who may you be, pray?" asked Uncle Bram with a twinkle in his eye.

Phil, to whom the query was addressed, drew back disconcerted.

"Why, don't you remember me?" he stammered.

"Of course, it's Phil," said Uncle Bram, pretending to recognize him at last and shaking hands emphatically. "You'll excuse me—won't you?—but I never knew a boy to grow twice his size in a fortnight. You had better give me notice next time you intend to put on a foot or two."

Phil glowed with pleasure. He was glad he was developing a physique; he had always had an idea that the bigger he grew, the more knowledge he would be able to accommodate. Another inch or two might make all the difference.

A short conversation between Dulcie and Uncle Bram, as they promenaded along the sea-front that evening, was rather significant of the state of relations which had prevailed among the three younger members of the party.

"I suppose you have been enjoying yourself like one o'clock," remarked Uncle Bram.

"Well, not so much as I thought I would," replied Dulcie a little dolefully.

"Oh! how's that?"

"I don't know—yes, I do know; it's Effie and Phil."

"What! you don't say they've been bullying you?"

"Oh, no, not the least little bit; only they make me feel so out of it."

"Seems, then, they've been chumming up together, eh?"

"Oh! ever so much. And if they let me come with them, it was like doing me a favor."

"Then, why didn't you tell your mamma about it?"

"That would be like sneaking; and she might have said it was my fault, and that I didn't try to make myself sociable."

"That's true. Well, I should have gone and told them plain and plump."

"I shouldn't. Think I wanted to let them see I cared?" exclaimed Dulcie with an ominous sniff. "And if he'd rather talk to her than to me"—Dulcie fumbled for her handkerchief—"I suppose it's because she's prettier than I am."

"But she isn't," said Uncle Bram, with a conviction that would have stopped an avalanche.

"And he isn't half as nice as his brother Leuw, and I've got a good mind to tell him so."

Uncle Bram persuaded her to refrain from a revelation which might annihilate Phil's good opinion of himself, and being of a peace-loving disposition, set about rectifying matters generally. Under his genial influence the strain of faction relaxed so effectually yet so imperceptibly as to make Dulcie doubt that it had ever existed. In consequence she endeavored to make good by a redoubled sweetness of manner the injustice she had done Phil and Effie by her groundless fancy. And that, combined with Uncle Bram's untiring resourcefulness of amusement, served to cast over the remainder of their sojourn a halo of consummate happiness.

Natural, therefore, in a way, was the moody and discontented look which Effie noticed on Phil's face the evening before their return to town. The two were standing on the seashore watching the sun drop beyond the horizon. Phil had long ago got over his fear that the red hot ball would go out with a hiss

and a whizz as it touched the water-line, though his wonder, how it managed to escape, remained unabated.

"I suppose you are sorry to go away from here," suggested Effie.

Phil shook his head. "No, I was only thinking how selfish I have been. It didn't come into my mind the whole time, and now it struck me all of a heap."

"Why, what have you been selfish about? I didn't notice anything."

"What! Didn't you see what a jolly good time I've been having?"

"Yes, but you didn't take it away from anybody else."

Phil ignored her, and continued half to himself: "And all the while I dare say she's been going it—rub, rub on the wash-board—from morning to night, and the steam from the copper scalding her face, and the sun shining his hottest through the skylight in the wash-kitchen, and the blisters, and a couple of hours' mangling when it was all dry, and Leuw . . ."

"Well, it was their own fault," broke in Effie.

"What do you mean?" cried Phil, turning on her almost fiercely.

Effie glanced away helplessly, but Phil's threateningly questioning look followed her everywhere till it forced her to speak out.

"I wasn't to tell you, but Auntie Duvéen wrote them to come here for a few days, or as long as they liked, and she was going to send them the money, and they wrote back they were much obliged, and they wouldn't."

"Of course, they wouldn't," echoed Phil grimly.

"Why of course?" asked Effie.

"Because they don't care about taking favors from strangers. They're proud—awfully. I wish I could be as proud as all that."

"Oh, Phil!"

"What's wrong now?"

"I didn't think you'd say that."

"And what did you expect me to say, please?" asked Phil, chillingly polite.

"That Auntie Duveen is a dear, and that it was sweet and kind of her to . . ."

"By gum, you're right, Effie, and—d'you mind calling me a beast? I'd do it myself, but it wouldn't sound hard enough."

Effie was about to burst out laughing; Phil's puckered lips, however, stopped her.

"Oh, Effie, Effie—I feel so sorry for them," he said with a break in his voice.

Silently she took his hand in hers and stood stroking it.

"And the worst of it is that all my worrying doesn't do any good," he went on.

"No, Phil, that's the best of it. It's why you shouldn't worry."

Another minute of stroking, and Phil began to see it in the same light.

"Jingo, ain't I going to make the other fellows sit up," he broke out.

The remark was quite inconsequent, but to Phil's mind the connection was clear. Success in school would be the first step towards the abolition of his mother's washing-board; and in order to attain that success he dared not distract his thoughts by inopportune misgivings and futile regret. Nevertheless, he was glad of the despondent mood through which

he had passed. It had served a distinct purpose. It had enabled him to lay his hand on the nondescript discontent which had dogged him awake and asleep ever since he left home, the feeling of a disloyal selfishness. He had, as it were, rescued himself into port, while his dear ones were struggling in mid-ocean on a precarious plank or two. While he had been with them, had partaken of their discomforts, he had been too much occupied with his own share of them to leave much room or time for sympathy with theirs. But now that his heart was vacant and at leisure, it seemed bent on making up for its indifference by an acuter sensitiveness, which hardly knew its object or motive. Phil had set it right at last. He would feel for them—ah! yes; but his feeling would have a distinct and sacred place all to itself, so that it might not clash with his other interests of life and get hurt.

"It does me a lot of good to talk with you," he told Effie.

"I am glad," she replied, without any attempt at coquetry.

"But you mustn't forget a little stroking now and then."

When Mrs. Duveen kissed Phil "good night" that evening, he for the first time and, therefore, much to her surprise returned the salute. But he did not tell her why; the reason might have taken some of the value out of the compliment. And, besides, he would not betray Effie. For the same reason, too, it was, that, when two days afterwards, the wiry-looking, keen-eyed head-master asked him for his name, Phil, with something that sounded like pride, made answer: "Philip Lipcott Duveen, sir."

CHAPTER XIII

"I TELL you it's a perfect disgrace; what do you say, Diamond?"

"Becky, my dear, you know I always say as you say," replied Mr. Diamond readily.

"The whole neighborhood is talking about it," continued Mrs. Diamond, flourishing her arms. "To think of a Jewish boy with respectable parents—one of them unfortunately deceased—idling about the streets, picking up all manner of wickedness, and getting into ruffianly ways. . . ."

"I haven't noticed any ruffianly ways about Leuw," interposed Mrs. Lipcott quietly.

"Not yet, of course, but give him time to show off. I never heard of such a thing. Why don't you 'prentice him to some honest trade where he'd be out of mischief; am I right or not, Diamond?"

"Perfectly right, Becky, my dear," Mr. Diamond hastened to affirm.

"I think Leuw knows what he is about," said Mrs. Lipcott, quietly as before.

"He knows, but you don't. Of course, I'm just the last person to interfere in anybody else's business, but I always like to do my duty, eh, Diamond?"

"Most certainly you do, Becky, my dear."

"Well, then, it's just like this," went on Mrs. Diamond, glaring at Mrs. Lipcott, "I'm responsible for you all to my dear friend, Mrs. Duveen. Now my dear friend, Mrs. Duveen, is going to bring up your

Phil for her own son; and I'll never be able to hold my head up, if your Phil's brother is going to be a loafer and a vagabond. . . ."

"Mrs. Diamond!" cried Mrs. Lipcott, her meek eyes suddenly ablaze with anger.

"There, there, don't jump down my throat," said Mrs. Diamond deprecatingly. "Anybody would think I said he was born to be hanged. Now, wouldn't you, Diamond?"

"I certainly would, Becky, my dear," said the echo, leaving the real point of the question in doubt.

"And I'm only putting you on your guard, so that you shouldn't have to reproach yourself with anything later on. Fancy a bit of a boy like that going where he likes and doing what he likes. I don't suppose you did that at his age, Diamond, or I don't think you'd have been my husband."

Mr. Diamond thought he wouldn't. Mrs. Diamond was of opinion that the tone in which he said it ought to have contained a trifle more apprehension at so terrible a possibility, and made a mental note to bring the matter up for exhaustive discussion at the earliest convenient occasion.

"He always tells me everything he's been at during the day," said Mrs. Lipcott. Mrs. Diamond shrugged her shoulders.

"Everything—except what he leaves out. How can you know? I consider it my bounden duty"—Mrs. Diamond's voice became quite solemn—"to warn you against letting him become a disgrace to my very dear friend, Mrs. Duveen; am I right. . . ."

"But what can I do?" broke in Mrs. Lipcott, beginning to be impressed in spite of herself. "He's

made up his mind against going for a 'prentice. Perhaps you might talk to him."

"God forbid," ejaculated Mr. Diamond hastily.

"That's a good idea," said Mrs. Diamond, ignoring his protest. "Send him round."

"Becky, I don't think you ought to rob a mother of the privilege of reproving her own child," remarked Mr. Diamond sanctimoniously.

"Fiddlesticks," snapped Mrs. Diamond. "Send him round, I say."

Mrs. Lipcott went home struggling bravely against her misgivings. Suppose, after all, there was something in Mrs. Diamond's raven's croak. Everything considered, Leuw was little more than a child; and he had set himself to wrestle with that most merciless of foes, the streets of a great city. Perhaps they might become too strong for him—overpower him with their temptations, snare his soul in their treacherous ambushes, crush his heart in their stony embrace. True, as she had said, so far she had seen no sign of it; but that perhaps only meant that the evil influences were taking deeper and more insidious root. The thought spurred her to frantic haste, as though it depended on mere speed of foot to catch up and avert the impending disaster.

Leuw certainly appeared innocent and conscience-easy enough, as she came upon him at the mouth of Narrow Alley.

"What's the hurry, mother?" he asked, looking at her with the large honest eyes which had been Dulcie's special discovery in him.

Mrs. Lipcott forced herself into calmness before she replied with some random explanation; then she

gave him the message from the Diamonds, without adding its particular purpose, and feeling all the time as though she had joined some conspiracy against her child. Leuw expressed no astonishment at being sent for, because he had been to the Diamonds' several times for odd jobs, such as brushing Mr. Diamond's wardrobe, or running an errand, with the result of additional sixpences to the Lipcott exchequer. And so the message found Leuw ready and willing to obey; despite her assurance that it was no urgent case, it was only with difficulty that his mother prevailed on him to snatch a hasty bite and gulp before starting. Still, this hastiness did not prevent him from noting and wondering at her apologetic demeanor.

"Come in, come in," said Mrs. Diamond, as Leuw poked his head in at the door. Leuw came in. At his entry Mr. Diamond crouched back into his arm-chair, crumpled himself up to the smallest size possible, and spread out his evening paper to act as a screen between himself and the rest of the room, making it evident that he did not wish to participate in the proceedings about to take place. He always thought there was something uncanny and mysterious about Leuw; he was a plain, straightforward man himself, and had no taste for dabbling in mysteries. If his wife cared about it . . .

Hark! This was her voice. The battle had commenced. Mr. Diamond tried to make himself still smaller! But strange! her words were addressed to himself, not to Leuw.

"I'm going out for ten minutes," she was saying. "You just see to him, Diamond."

Mr. Diamond grinned fatuously at his wife's little

joke, then the door slammed. Mr. Diamond looked up startled; he and Leuw were alone in the room.

"Becky, Becky," shouted Mr. Diamond, rushing frantically out into the passage.

"Coward," hissed Mrs. Diamond; "d'you funk a little boy like that?"

"Yes, but I don't know what to say to him," whined Mr. Diamond.

"Say whatever you like. Only make it strong. Understand what I mean? Strong."

And presently Mr. Diamond found himself back in the room, with a feeling of having to choose between the devil and the deep sea.

Leuw had expressed no surprise at the peculiar scene; he never expressed surprise at anything. It appeared to him that, in betraying his state of mind to people, he was giving away something for which they had not paid value, and which was consequently an extravagance. Mr. Diamond profited by his indifference to get a clear grasp of the situation. Here was a choice between being blackguarded by young Leuw or risking the tender mercies of his wife.

He chose the latter, because he held it the height of philosophy to obtain the longest possible respite from trouble. Besides, he knew exactly how far his wife would go; she dared not kill him, because she would not be entitled to her full widow's pension for another three years. In Leuw's case there were no such considerations, but there were reports of his hasty temper which were most alarming. Mr. Diamond was not a coward, as his wife had suggested; but he loved himself dearly. And a task which even his wife fought shy of was surely not cut to his measure.

With a benign smile he beckoned Leuw to a chair, and mumbling an apology resumed his paper. Leuw was quite content to sit still, because, although he had pretty well found his "street legs" by now, a day's work was a day's work. The silence continued for ten minutes; then it struck Leuw that, as there seemed nothing on hand, he might as well be sitting at home, keeping his mother company; so he spoke:

"Is there anything you want me to do, Mr. Diamond?"

"Presently, presently," murmured Mr. Diamond, bending over his paper in an attitude of utter abstraction.

Leuw permitted the "presently" to rank as a period of five minutes by the clock opposite, and at its termination repeated his question.

"Eh—who—what's that?" cried Mr. Diamond distractedly, looking round him like a man wrested from deep slumber. "Oh! you still here? Let me see: Anything for you to do? No, no, no, I don't think so. Thank you all the same for calling to ask. Good night, my boy." And again the newspaper claimed him.

Leuw considered for a moment or two whether or not to investigate this strange behavior. He decided on the negative; probably the whole thing was due to a misunderstanding of his mother. So he politely returned the "good night," and walked out.

Outside the door he almost collided with Mrs. Diamond.

"Oh! I was just coming in," she said, with some confusion. "Well, I'm glad you took it so quietly, at any rate."

"Took what quietly?"

"What Mr. Diamond said to you."

"But he didn't say anything. He was reading the paper the whole of the time."

"Oh, was he? Well, it doesn't matter at all. You needn't wait."

Leuw was simply too much amazed to make any remonstrance at his abrupt dismissal.

When he was half-way down the stairs, the sound of Mrs. Diamond's voice came trailing after him stridently indistinct. There was going to be a rum-pus. Leuw wondered if it was about the thing that didn't matter. He might easily find out by going back; but listening at keyholes was not in his line, despite Mrs. Diamond's bright example. So he hurried to get out of all possible earshot, only to defeat his own ends. For, as he got into the street, Mrs. Diamond's words banged full against his ear through the open front room window.

"Why I didn't take the job myself? I suppose you wanted him to cut my throat with one of your slaughter knives. Didn't you see him staring black murder. . . ."

Here the window came down with a crash, amputating the rest of the sentence. Leuw made for home without any further waste of time. He was sure now that his mother's message was due to no delusion. His certainty was confirmed by her glance of expectancy as he entered.

"Ain't they a bit too old for having a game with people?" he said carelessly, jerking his head Diamondward.

"I'm sure they meant it for the best," said Mrs. Lipcott, anxiously conciliating.

"Dare say they did, if I only knew what."

And then by question and answer it was elicited that Leuw's call had been futile. Mrs. Lipcott learnt it with dismay. Having persuaded herself that Mrs. Diamond's eloquence would prevail upon Leuw to choose another and more supervised occupation, she had during his absence allowed her apprehension at his danger, already violently set agog, to grow into a full swing. And now it depended on her own scant powers of argument to set her heart at rest again. Well, she could but try. Leuw listened to her attentively; she could always count on that much from Leuw. And when he made no immediate reply to her tale, she became rather hopeful of success.

"What do you think about it yourself?" asked Leuw finally.

"Oh! I'm not afraid," she prevaricated; "but you see when the whole neighborhood talks . . ."

"Well, as long as you're satisfied, we'll let it talk, eh, mother?"

Mrs. Lipcott said yes, but she looked no; and Leuw saw which way the wind was blowing. He moved closer to her.

"You've known me quite a long time, ain't you, mother?"

Mrs. Lipcott could not repress a smile at the quaint query.

"And I've been a good sort of boy mostly, ain't I, mother?" continued Leuw, with an emphasis on the concluding refrain.

"Not mostly—always," was the earnest reply.

"And the neighborhood wants to make you think I've got tired of being good. Don't you fret, mother;

it's only what the neighborhood says about everybody else, too. It wouldn't be a neighborhood if it didn't."

Mrs. Lipcott made a gesture, which might be either assent or dissent, with the chances in favor of the former.

"Why, I've got no time to go bad," said Leuw hopefully; "the day's only just long enough to sell clean out. And I don't like to take any remnants back to Christopher."

Anxiously he looked for the effect of his words, but Mrs. Lipcott's head drooped low. Leuw became alarmed; he had not thought his mother would need so much convincing. He changed his tactics.

"Well, if you very much want me to, I'll go into 'prentice. But I've got the horrors of the workshop. Didn't you always say it killed father?"

"That it did," said Mrs. Lipcott with a shudder. Leuw took courage from the shudder.

"Now, suppose I gave you my word; would that be any good to you?"

Mrs. Lipcott sat up resolutely. "No, Leuw, don't give me your word. I don't deserve it; I am a foolish woman that doesn't know her mind for five minutes at a time. It's all right, Leuw; we'll let 'em talk."

"And they only meant it for the best," added Leuw, rendered magnanimous by his victory.

This colloquy was a memorable one for Leuw, inasmuch as in time to come he could look back on it as the last occasion on which his right of initiative was challenged.

For the present, however, he thought it due to himself to investigate the hidden causes of this attempt to bully him into submission. He did not anticipate

much difficulty in the search, because, as a matter of fact, he had for guide a conjecture that almost amounted to certainty.

"Going out again?" said Mrs. Lipcott.

"Only for a mouthful of fresh air," replied Leuw casually.

A sudden fear struck Mrs. Lipcott. "Leuw, you're not going over to Mrs. Diamond's?"

"Not if I know it. She'd ask me to sweep up what's left of Mr. Diamond."

Leuw sauntered leisurely out of Narrow Alley into the main street. Here he had to curtail his strides still more, for he was in the midst of chaos that yelled and wriggled and tumbled about him in male and female atoms of humanity. The scene was chiefly instructive in showing the infinite gradations of smallnesses through which one must pass on the road to adolescence. The shrill-voiced turmoil had reached the fever-heat, which always heralded the impending break-up. Already there were sounds of lamentations as recalcitrant offspring were being fished out of the tumult, and hauled home to bed by solicitous mothers, who had spent the evening pleasantly if not profitably in talking scandal on the door-steps.

Skilfully utilizing the gaps left by these removals—he was not conceited enough to think they were due to a kindly consideration for his convenience—Leuw at last managed to reach Dunk's Row. It was hither that the more serious and sober-minded of the local young hopefuls repaired nightly to study the laws of hazard by practical experiments with buttons, marbles, and other articles of current value.

There was a report that these last included the

humbler coins of the realm, but in most quarters this was looked upon only as a clumsy attempt to give the locality a fictitious reputation for wealth. Here, too, Leuw was certain of finding Yellow Joe, whom he wished to take the opposite side in the argument about to ensue.

Yellow Joe was there right enough, but he was "out of it," that is, he was not playing, having lost all his available capital. It did not argue well for the reputation he enjoyed among his comrades for fair dealings that he was not allowed to play "owings." It was likewise impossible for him to obtain a loan without placing a heavy security, which, however, as a rule, only shifted the impossibility one degree back.

"Hullo, Joe," said Leuw, shaving against him rather closely.

Yellow Joe turned sharply. "That's my shoulder," he snapped.

"Keep it," Leuw snapped back.

Yellow Joe meditated. Dunk's Row saw very little of Leuw.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I want to know if you're the neighborhood," replied Leuw, gazing at him hardily.

"Don't come any o' your cannon and drums on me at this time o' night," said Yellow Joe, his whole attention seemingly riveted on the game.

"You know what I mean, all the same," insinuated Leuw.

"No, I—well done, Moey, got him again," shouted Joe.

Leuw waited a moment for Yellow Joe's enthusiasm at Moey's achievement to cool down.

"I said you know what I mean," he then repeated.

"Oh, is that what you said? It was worth saying twice."

Leuw's patience broke. "Who told his mother lies about somebody, and whose mother went and told Mrs. Diamond?"

Joe appeared to consider the matter; then he turned Leuw gently by the shoulder.

"See that lamp-post there?" he asked, pointing.

"I ain't blind," said Leuw.

"Well, climb up to the top, and ask the gaslight. That'll tell you."

"I've asked it, and it said Yellow Joe."

Joe laughed artificially before he remarked: "And a jolly good job, too. What now?"

"What now? Nothing much. You'll just 'poller-gize to me before the whole bang lot."

So far little attention had been paid to the altercation, owing to the superior attraction of the game. But "apologize" was a word so rarely heard in those circles, and so much more rarely acted upon, that the novelty of the thing asserted itself. It was the above-mentioned Moey who asked what it was all about. Leuw laid the case before them. During his narrative bets were rapidly offered and taken on the chance of there being a fight; some of the hardier speculators even went so far as to risk a "double event" by wagering not only on the fight but also on the victor. Leuw, however, was favorite.

"But how d'you know it was him?" asked Moey, who was of the peace party.

"He just said so," replied Leuw.

"I didn't," repudiated Yellow Joe.

"Then let's go round to Mrs. Diamond and ask her," suggested Leuw.

But Yellow Joe, with an obstinacy which certainly seemed suspicious, refused this confrontation with Mrs. Diamond. Leuw took off his coat with a most formidable deliberation, while Mocy and the rest of the peace party frantically clutched their brass buttons so as to enjoy one last lingering farewell of their darlings.

Yellow Joe, however, was still making up his mind. He knew Leuw's accusation was well founded. He had told his mother, and his mother had told Mrs. Diamond. Jealousy of Leuw's free lance life, as compared with his own hand and foot tied drudgery in the workshop, had prompted him. Leuw had heightened it by hinting to him of his intimate relations with old Christopher and the advantages accruing to him therefrom. It was galling to be outdone in enterprise by a mere Leuw Lipcott. Leuw Lipcott must be reduced to his own level; and Mrs. Diamond had great influence with Leuw's mother, and would be only too glad to exercise it. Had she succeeded? That he would know to-morrow.

"Go it, Joe," suddenly roared the war faction.

Ah! of course, meantime he was to fight; and with Leuw—with Leuw of the supernatural penetration, Leuw of the righteous cause, Leuw of the long arms and knuckly-looking fists. He didn't like it.

"Go it, he'll catch cold in his shirt sleeves," roared the war faction once more.

Yellow Joe liked it still less; Leuw was to keep himself warm by pummeling him. Desperately he grasped the lapels of his jacket preliminary to doffing

it. Then his face lit up with the brightness of a sudden idea—only to be darkened again presently by a scowl of sullen resignation, rendered more specious by the limp dropping of his hands.

"I don't care; he can hit me if he likes. I won't hit him back," he burst out.

Of course, the war faction wanted to know the reason why—in fact, insisted upon it rather fiercely.

Yellow Joe gave them a look—the sort of look with which the early martyrs probably tried to shame the lions in the arena.

"For why?" he echoed. "Because he's a Jew and I'm a Jew; and the man what preached last Sabbath in our synagogue said we got quite enough hard knocks from the Christians without banging each other about."

A howl of derision from the war faction greeted the explanation, and even the peace party, while admiring its ingenuity, had to admit that it was scarcely strong enough to meet the exigencies of the occasion. All eyes were turned on Leuw, with whom rested the further developments of the case.

Leuw responded by demanding his coat back from his second and putting it on again amid a hush of expectation. He broke it by saying:

"You're quite right, Joe; we oughtn't to bang each other about. Good-night."

He walked off rapidly, and left silence in his place; until Moey spoke up, saying it wasn't fair, and they ought never to have betted on such a thing. As regarded himself, he would never take the forfeit to which he was entitled by the terms of the betting. Fired by his noble example, the rest of the peace party

also agreed to remit their due—a remission which the war faction accepted with rather shameless alacrity.

Yellow Joe looked round and found himself alone. What had happened? There had been no fight, and he had had no licking. But all the same he felt that Leuw had once more had the best of him. Probably the others had gone after him to tell him so.

And then Yellow Joe slunk off home sore and chafing, but comforting himself with the knowledge—acquired by bitter experience—that your luck must turn if you only play long enough.

He would play Leuw a little longer.

CHAPTER XIV

It was now five weeks since Leuw had established himself as a bonâ-fide man of business. The board and lodging rates, which, as arranged, he paid his mother, enabled the household to steer an easier course and to keep clear of "chalk" at the tradesmen's. The landlord, too, was beginning to hold up the Lipcotts as a model of punctual solvency to the remaining tenants.

During the time Leuw had naturally seen a great deal of old Christopher Donaldson. In their more introspective moments they were themselves surprised at the degree of intimacy to which they had attained. Leuw ascribed it readily to the unifying influence of Sol Myers, whose name was never very far from their talk. But old Christopher, while admitting Sol Myers as a fortunate accident, thought there must be some more subtle cause which reached down to the very root of the matter; and the mystery of it worried him greatly. He discarded theory after theory, till at last, the evening which followed the abortive encounter between Yellow Joe and Leuw, he greeted the latter on his entry with an excited:

"I've got it, boy!"

"Have you?" asked Leuw eagerly, tumbling at once to old Christopher's drift.

"Yes, got it," reiterated the old man, rubbing his hands gleefully; "it's because me and you are first cousins sort of."

Leuw looked blankly disappointed. He had hoped for a more feasible suggestion, and Christopher's discovery did not carry conviction on the face of it.

"You don't see it?" asked Christopher, simply gloating over his perplexity. "Wait a minute. What are you? A 'Ebrew. What am I? A Scotchman what Lunnon has got hold on, and made a blessed cockney to the very tip of his tongue—the Lord forgive me for it. Well, d'you see now?"

"I think I'm just beginning to," temporized Leuw.

"Now, look here, boy." The admonition was unnecessary, because Leuw was already staring at him as hard as he could.

"It's my opinion as we Scotch folk is them Lost Ten Tribes what all the world's been looking for high and low ever since."

"By gum, I never thought of that," cried Leuw carried away by the boldness of the idea.

"And it gave my brains many a twist before I got to it, I can tell you," admitted Christopher.

"Now, what is the course of my argyment?" he continued. "I looked at the Scotchman, and I looked at the Jew. Hang me, says I to myself—they're baked in the same oven. The Scotchman's got a way of getting on mostly when he's made up his mind to it—so has the 'Ebrew. The Scotchman's steady and sober, not shipping more liquor nor what he can carry—so does the 'Ebrew. Now, how does that strike you for argyment?"

"There's a lot in it," replied Leuw, a little absently, because he was trying to work the thing out for himself, and also pursuing an idea of his own.

"I should think there was. There's a lot of can-

didates for the glory of being them Lost Ten Tribes; there's the English and the Welsh and folks over seas. But it's our'n right enough. Only being 'cute, we keep mum—don't brag about it. That's how we get God's blessing on the sly, as it were, being the seed of Abraham and prospering accordingly; and likewise don't get badgered about, like what you hear about your brother 'Ebrews in foreign parts, more's the shame."

"Yes—no," said Leuw, still deep in thought.

"More's the shame," echoed Christopher. "There's a way of treating the people what invented the Book, and made the world a present of the patent! And then it goes and pokes fun at 'em for having long noses. Of course you must get a long nose if every jackanapes gives a pull at it whenever the fit takes him. And what does your 'Ebrew do? Gives a yell? Oh! no. He just takes no notice, biding his time, knowing as the longest lane must have a turning; and he's been through a long lane or two in his time, eh, boy?"

"He has," assented Leuw, to whom the history of his people was no closed book.

"Yes, that's what he's special good at—keeping of himself quiet and well-behaved," continued Christopher's reflections; "quiet and well-behaved. And I am not the only one what says so. Ask the coroners and the police. D'you remember what these places hereabouts was like forty odd years ago? Of course you don't; but I do. It was just like old Beelzebub had taken the lid off hell, and had let all his pet sinners out for a holiday. There wasn't a night passed without some shindy or murder or mutilation down

one of those alleys, and no 'copper' before starting night duty thought of ordering next morning's breakfast, because he wasn't sure he'd be there to eat it. And just thenabouts you 'Ebrews began to show up, dribbling in at first one by one, and then more and more, and by and by whole shoals of 'em—well, God knows how they worked it, but presently all the wickedness began to scurry away like rats when the daylight shines in through the pantry-window—the devil knows where it scurried to—and then things became quiet and nice and respectable, and I left off sleeping at nights behind the counter and sold my six-shooter—oh! yes, that's what you 'Ebrews did for Spitalfields, and I'd just like the bloke what pops up every session with a bill against this 'ere Alien Immigration to make a note of it. All of which goes to prove, if you look at it in the proper way, as Scotchmen and 'Ebrews is first cousins by right of Auld Lang Syne."

"Strikes me," said Leuw, who by this time had worked out his idea, "strikes me that if the Scotchies and the Jews was to put their heads together, they'd make the world sit up—don't you think so?"

Old Christopher, treating the suggestion as a joke and wishing to humor Leuw, threw back his head preparatory to one of his rafter-slaking guffaws. In the process, however, he caught a glimpse of Leuw's grave, nay, anxious face, and his jaws shut again with a snap. He paused to consider the matter in its new light.

"It'd be a good thing—if it could be managed—a good thing," he declared solemnly.

"Yes," said Leuw and was about to continue when apparently he changed his mind, and wound up instead with a rather abrupt:

"Good night, I must get home."

"Good night, cousin Leuw," replied Christopher.

Leuw sent back a tremulous smile in acknowledgment of the allusion and hurried on; while Christopher betook himself once more to the tinkering up of his old toys, scratching his head and feeling uncomfortable beneath the burden of a new problem, which might prove more obstreperous than the one he had just solved with so much tribulation of mind.

Leuw's progress homeward was interrupted, just as he was crossing the High Street, by the sight of a penny museum which had opened business that evening. He "walked up"—to use the strictly technical expression—but only to where he could view at easy range the posters, which, by the mere stridency of their coloring, seemed to cry out shame on all doubts as to the genuineness of the miracles within. He had a fugitive idea that it would be nice and colleague-like to give a fledgeling concern the encouragement of his custom; but then he was hardly yet in a position to permit himself the luxury of expensive amusements. And besides, the pictures gave one so high an expectation, that possibly the originals might not come up to them; and it would certainly be in the truer interests of the show to avoid being disappointed in it.

Nevertheless, to eschew any untoward temptation, Leuw turned sharply away. The sharp turn caused him to collide with a youth about his own age, who, with a companion, was devouring the poster depicting the two-horned chicken.

"Who are you ashovin' of?" demanded the other half of the collision unamiably.

"I'm very sorry—I didn't mean to," apologized Leuw.

"Didn't mean to? What do you want to get into people's way for? Why don't you pack up and go back to your own country?"

The companion here interposed with a snort of disgust.

"Question to ask!" he jeered. "Why 'e don't go back to 'is country? Don't you know as a bloomin' Jew ain't got no bloomin' country?"

"Thought as they lived in a place called Jerus'lem," said the first speaker.

"They did, till they got kicked out for not behavin' o' theirselves properly."

Leuw listened quietly to the duologue, deliberating whether to go away, or, if not, what attitude to take up. The first alternative was safer, but it would leave a stain on the national 'scutcheon for which he would afterwards have to deal with his conscience. No, he would stay and see the thing out. He faced the two squarely.

"Oh! no—you're quite wrong," he said. "We weren't kicked out. Only Jerusalem was getting too small for us, so we came out to buy up the whole world to do with what we liked. We've got about a quarter of it already."

His defiance in mien and voice flabbergasted the two anti-Semites—but not for long.

"Bli' me, Bill, did you 'ear that?" asked the first of them.

"Crickey, there's cheek for you!" exclaimed the second. "If I was you, Slimy, I'd knock that ugly old cocoanut of 'is'n into the gutter."

"Go it, give 'im what for," said the museum manager encouragingly.

A fight meant a crowd; and a crowd was the very thing he wanted about his establishment.

"Bill, see 'e don't cut and run while I take my coat off," shouted Slimy.

The admonition, however, was quite unnecessary. Leuw made no move to escape. He had expected this, in fact, had brought it upon himself wilfully and knowingly. It was quite a coincidence to be embroiled in a fight on two successive evenings. Only this time it was coming off in earnest. Well, could one wish for anything better than to strike for the glory of one's people? The showman smirked delightedly; the anticipated crowd was beginning to collect. The rampant Slimy was exchanging a few preliminary spars with the air, when a stentorian voice said:

"Now, then, Slimy Nipper—up to your pranks again? Clear, or I'll . . ."

That was as far as the voice got, for the Slimy Nipper had disappeared with the speed which, for marvelousness, could give all the exhibits of the grumbling showman a long start and an easy beating.

"Lucky I came up," said the constable good-naturedly to Leuw. "He'd have punched a hole right through you."

Leuw walked off, not at all grateful for what the constable called his luck. He felt as if somebody had wrapped him up in cotton wool, and had put him away in a safe place. What consoled him somewhat was that he had probably escaped a black eye; and black eyes would have given a fillip to his mother's allayed

suspicious, and he had an idea that his people could more comfortably bear another insult or two than his mother the pang of a fresh uncertainty.

As Leuw, next morning, sallied out of Narrow Alley on his way to business, he almost ran into Yellow Joe's arms.

"Hullo, Joe," he cried cheerily. "Been waiting for me long?"

"Who says I've been waiting for you?" growled Yellow Joe, somewhat disconcerted, however. And then, mumbling unintelligibly, he quickly crossed over to the other side.

Leuw gave a ringing laugh, not of derision but of amusement. It was certainly comical to see Yellow Joe play the injured innocent. Leuw had quite forgiven him. To harbor resentment against a person like Yellow Joe was an absurd waste of energy. Briskly he stepped out, and in another moment or two had walked Yellow Joe clean out of his head. When he reached Christopher's shop he found it still closed; so he planted himself with his back to the door, and announced his presence by a succession of vigorous heel-taps. At the same time his glance roved idly down the street. Suddenly he gave a start, and his rubadub came to an abrupt stop. On the other side of the street, a little way down, stood a dray cart; and from behind the dray cart Leuw thought he saw Yellow Joe peeping at him. However, the crowds of people passing in both directions made his impression very uncertain; moreover, he was only vouchsafed a momentary glimpse, for the peeping head disappeared at the first sign of having attracted attention. Leuw had half made up his mind to go over

and see, when the "stump, stump" of Christopher inside the shop aroused him to the superior claims of wage-earning over the unprofitable gratification of an idle curiosity.

Leuw was a little surprised at Christopher's unwonted taciturnity towards him, which continued for the next two or three days; but ascribing it to some mood of the old man with which he had not previously made acquaintance, he passed it over without comment. Least of all did he connect the cause of it with himself. But, as a matter of fact, Christopher's chariness of speech was due to his hard tussle with the problem which Leuw had foisted upon him a few evenings back. He knew that a simple question to Leuw would dispose of it at once, but he preferred taxing his own powers of perception—just by way of mental exercise. He had made some headway already; he hoped to come to the bottom of it by the middle of the following week.

Meanwhile, however, something else occurred which had to be attended to at once. A communication reached Christopher which had to be answered. He answered it, somewhat peculiarly, by asking Leuw one morning to take charge of the shop, as he himself was going out for the day.

"Anything happened?" enquired Leuw.

"What do you expect to happen? I'm taking a day off, that's all," replied Christopher.

"But there's Sunday," pointed out Leuw.

"I know there is; only I want to see what a week-day holiday feels like."

Leuw looked the reluctance he felt. Not that he was unwilling to do his friend a favor, but the idea

of having the shop under his unqualified control for a whole twelve hours made him uncomfortable.

Christopher was no penman, and so he kept no books, and took no stock of the thousand and one articles contained in the shop. It was really quite a big shop when one came to think of it. All these would be at Leuw's mercy, together with the till; for how was Christopher going to check the day's sales against any account Leuw chose to render him?

"What's the matter?" asked Christopher. "You shan't lose anything. I'll pay you half a crown for the job."

"It isn't that," said Leuw, and told him his real objection.

"That's my business," replied Christopher curtly.

After that, of course, Leuw could no longer refuse. He needed no instructions, because he had long ago acquired all the details of price, and could lay his hand on any required article with eyes shut. Soon he was busy. What surprised him greatly was the taking capacity of the shop, the extent of which he had never suspected. By midday five shillings and two-pence had come in, and by tea-time the returns had swollen to nine and eight. Leuw enjoyed the feeling of responsibility to the full. Once or twice he had even got so far as to imagine that this prosperous concern was all his own, till the entrance of a customer and an enquiry into the meaning of Mr. Donaldson's absence ruthlessly shattered his illusion. If Christopher were only sharp enough to catch at the hint which Leuw had thrown out to him the other night, and which Leuw had lacked courage to put into plainer terms! It would certainly have made him happier to

know that, although Christopher was not sharp enough at the time, he had put his mind to the grindstone ever since.

True to his word, Christopher returned punctually at closing time. Leuw eagerly held out to him the list of items he had jotted down as each was sold. But Christopher waved it aside, and somewhat portentously took out of his pocket a square-folded piece of paper.

"It's answered now," he said.

"What is?" asked Leuw, gazing at him astonished.

"This is. Read." And Christopher thrust the paper into his hands. It was scrawled over with hand-printed characters, evidently intended to throw the scent off their origin, and they said:

"Beware of a party what calls himself Leuw Lipcott. He ain't no good. He does you brown right and left, which he brags of it to the other boys, helping himself to whatever he can lay his hands on, and once he stole a suvring from the money-box when you wasn't looking. Chuck him or you're a rooned man."

Leuw read it to the end, and looked up at Christopher without a tremor.

"Found it on the counter yesterday dinner time," explained Christopher, "and this was my little way of answering it."

"Oh! Mr. Donaldson," exclaimed Leuw.

Christopher held up his hand warningly. "No, none of that! It's done with. Here's your half-crown and be off, or I'll fall asleep standing. Greenwich Park hills all day is too much for a man with only one leg. I say, you can have this, too, if you like."

Leuw took the anonymous letter and went. He was so much impressed by old Christopher's drastic way of settling the incident that he did not give a thought to what course of action he should adopt against his would-be defamer. Indeed, the question only came home to him when he saw Yellow Joe hanging about the mouth of Narrow Alley. Of course he would be there, thought Leuw, to see how the thing had gone off. But Leuw's first impulse was to rush up to the anonymous correspondent and thank him effusively; he argued that if a man does you a good turn, it does not matter that his intentions were bad. Then the humorous aspect of the case struck him; he would at least have a little fun with Yellow Joe. So, assuming a woe-begone mien, he turned the corner of the Alley in ostentatious disconsolateness.

"What's the matter, old pard?" enquired Joe sympathetically.

"I'm done for," moaned Leuw.

"What's up now?"

"That old bloke I used to deal with has given me the kick; won't trust me any more. Said I was a thief. Now you know I ain't a thief, don't you, Joe?"

"Never heard anybody say anything against you that way," replied Joe, trying to find out what made the street-lamp flicker so.

"But he might take me on again if I brought him a character from somebody," went on Leuw. "Where am I to get it from? Now, if you're a friend of mine, Joe, you'll do me a favor and write a couple of lines, and I'll say they're from a Reverend, eh?"

"My writing ain't good enough," said Joe.

"Oh, you needn't write it, you can print it, you know," was the quick reply.

From merely flickering, the street-lamp seemed all at once to break out into a fantastic dance.

"The idea!" quavered Joe. "Printing! He'd find out in a minute."

"Well, then, the least you might do is to put your name to this, and say it's all bunkum."

Joe cast a glance at his handiwork with which Leuw suddenly confronted him, gave a yell, and took to his heels. With a smile of self-congratulation Leuw walked on. But he had hardly cleared the Alley entrance, when he felt a sharp tug at his shoulder. He turned and saw Yellow Joe's eyes gleaming strangely into his own.

"You'll be the death o' me one of these days," he heard him gasp at the same time.

"Oh! How's that?"

"You'll make me bu'st with yer quizzin'. Why don't yer get in a wax with me and have me locked up?"

"What? A Jew lock up a Jew for wanting to do him harm? Not I."

"Well, then, if you won't lock me up, p'raps"—Joe stammered—"p'raps you'll shake hands with me."

"That I'll do," replied Leuw. And he did.

"You might do something else."

"What's that?"

"Give me back my—my letter."

Leuw stole at him a quick glance of suspicion. "What d'you want it for?"

"To look at when I feel spiteful ag'inst anybody," replied Yellow Joe.

Leuw handed it to him without a word. Equally silently Joe took it and departed. When Leuw finally

got to his supper that evening, he felt he had worked unusually hard to deserve it. For, in addition to the day's honest toil, had he not rubbed the world cleaner of just one speck of evil?—which is a great achievement even for the greatest of men. He thought of the strengthening of the tie between himself and Christopher, the result of Yellow Joe's iniquitous designs; he also thought of Yellow Joe's newly-found grace and contrition, the outcome of a half-hearted jest. And he concluded the Great Power which ordered the tangled courses of the stars showed almost greater by guiding the crooked bent of the petty human brain to a straight issue.

It is true that Christopher had timed himself to arrive at the solution of his problem by the middle of the week following. But whether he had had an inspiration, or whether his outing had shaken up his latent faculties, he was able to greet Leuw next morning—a Friday—with the information that he had something very special to say to him that afternoon. The season was now the beginning of autumn, and the Sabbath came in pretty early. So Leuw presented himself at the shop a little after five, hoping that Christopher's "something very special" would not detain him long, as he did not care to miss Evening Service at the synagogue. Without it he hardly felt complete; for it was in the little sanctuary that he best seemed able to find and collect himself, bit by bit, as it were, after the dizzying turmoil of the working week. But when Christopher motioned him into the little laboratory behind, he knew that the interview was likely to be a lengthy one.

"Sit down," directed Christopher, at the same time

seating himself to face Leuw. He began by saying nothing, but by favoring Leuw with a protracted and sort of wiseacre stare across the breadth of the table. Leuw sat as for his photograph.

"I thought I'd get to it at last," finally observed Christopher, with a knowing shake of the head.

"Get to what?" of course enquired Leuw.

"The other day, talking about Jews and Scotchmen you happened to remark—not by accident neither—that if the two was to put their heads together they'd do great things."

Leuw started up, but Christopher hushed him with a wave of his hand, and continued:

"Now, you're a Jew and I'm a Scotchman, and you thought as we might try the idea on a small scale."

Leuw flushed up. "Beg your pardon, Mr. Donaldson—I know it was awful cheek . . ."

"Silence!" roared Christopher. "And, what's more, I've made up my mind to try it. From next Monday this 'ere concern starts as Donaldson & Lipcott, or the other way round if you like. And the terms is: half profits to the penny."

"I won't take it, Mr. Donaldson," cried Leuw hotly; "it's robbing you!"

"Well, I can get myself robbed of my own money, if I like, can't I?" shouted back Christopher. "But don't think you'll only just have to put your hand in my pocket and take it out again. You'll have to work your level best for it; mind that."

"It isn't fair," remonstrated Leuw. "You give everything, and what d'you get from me?"

"I get your brains, and that's the best capital of all, because it's current coin everywhere. It's no use,

Leuw, you can't choke me off, I know what I'm about; and if you contradict me again, I'll jolly well court-martial you for insubordination."

Leuw did not contradict, because he was growing quite dumb as the full drift of Christopher's offer came borne upon him.

Christopher noticed it, and, in order to give him time to recover, discussed the arrangement in a practical, matter-of-fact sort of way that was most reassuring. And presently Leuw joined in, sparingly at first, then more volubly, until he ousted Christopher altogether, and let his schemes, hopes, and aspirations for the new venture break loose and run riot. Christopher listened smilingly; then he said:

"You're just a runaway young colt. Never mind, I'll know how to keep a taut bridle."

That sobered Leuw, and made him remember that it was wrong of him to keep all his joy to himself. He was much too late for synagogue, but he and his mother would that evening hold a thanksgiving service of their own, which would exalt their mean little dwelling-place to the rank and dignity of a golden-domed temple.

Christopher saw him as far as the door, holding his hand all the while; there he bent down and whispered confidentially:

"Don't you see? I've got to do something to get even with Syd Mitchell, or else he mightn't talk to me when we meet later on."

Leuw got home, at one stride, as it seemed to him, and stormed up the staircase as if to test what amount of ricketing it would really survive. As he bounded into the room, his mother faced him with a smiling trepidation that looked odd. What also puzzled him

was that the door of the scullery cupboard was flung back, exposing to view the odds and ends of household necessities, a most unusual thing—especially on a Sabbath eve—to be countenanced by that model of order and tidiness whom he was privileged to call mother. Then he guessed.

“Phil’s behind there,” he exclaimed promptly.

With a joyous laugh at the failure of the surprise, Phil sprang forward into Leuw’s embrace. Leuw, however, drew back startled. Was this stylish young gentleman his erstwhile brother Phil? Phil noticed his hesitation, and also stopped short in pained wonder.

“Leuw, dear, won’t you have anything to do with me?” he quavered.

“Won’t I? See if I won’t,” cried Leuw, recovering himself. And by token of it his arms were round Phil’s neck, and his cheek kept glued against Phil’s cheek for the space of five seconds. That was manlier than kissing, besides serving the same purpose.

“May I tell now, mother?” asked Phil.

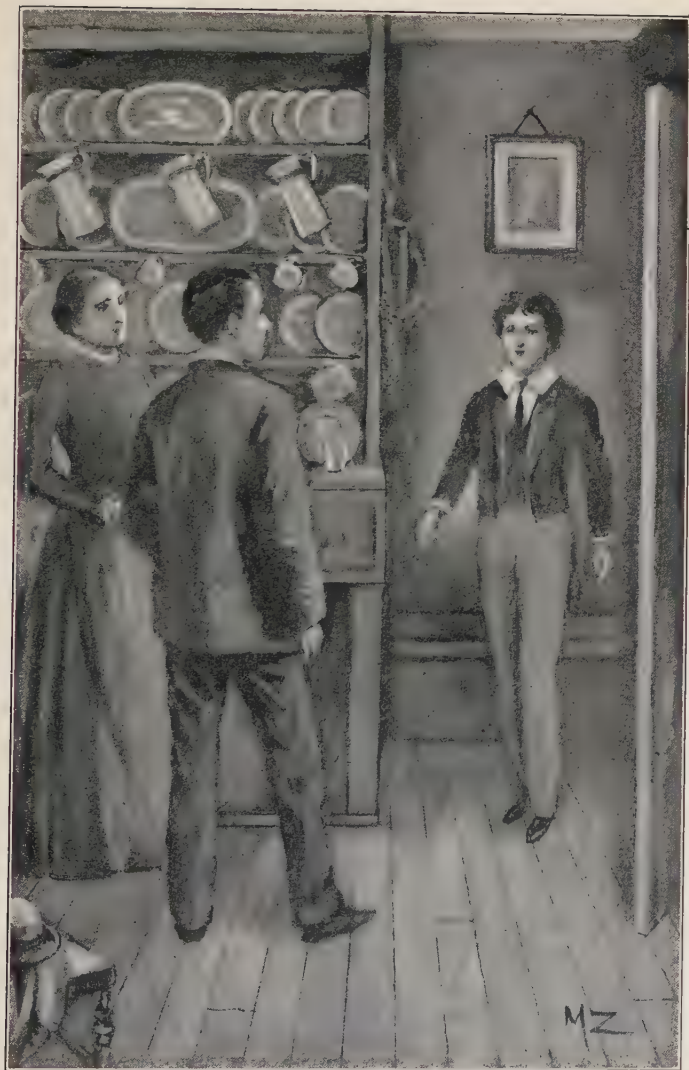
“Phil’s got some good news, and I thought he ought to keep it till we were all together,” explained Mrs. Lipcott.

Leuw looked gratefully at his mother and then expectantly at Phil. The latter took a deep breath.

“Well, I came out top in the entrance exam. and got the scholarship,” he murmured.

“Bravo, Phil, I knew you’d knock ’em,” shouted Leuw.

“Auntie sent me to tell you myself; she said it was too good for a letter,” went on Phil. “But it was mean of you—why haven’t you been to see me after all the asking?”



"LEUW, DEAR, WON'T YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH ME?"

"We'll come right enough, all in good time," said Leuw thoughtfully. "And now it's my turn."

"What for?" asked Phil.

"D'you think you've bought up all the good news in the world?" asked Leuw with affected scorn. "I can also do a bit in that line. I've taken on a shop."

"Leuw!" exclaimed Mrs. Lipcott aghast.

And then Leuw, without further circumlocution, gave a detailed account of Christopher's magnanimity and all that it would mean to them. Of course he was listened to with rapt attention, especially by Phil, to whom this was the first intimation of Leuw's doings since they had seen each other last. All he could say on the matter was that his brother Leuw came up to his expectations. Mrs. Lipcott just lifted up her eyes to heaven and murmured:

"Thank God."

Leuw, who caught the two words in transit, thought they were a whole liturgy in themselves.

It was understood, of course, that Phil would spend the Sabbath with them. Mrs. Duveen did not expect him back till the following evening.

"I wish you had given me notice," said Mrs. Lipcott; "I'd have made something extra."

"I'm glad you didn't; it would have made me feel a stranger," said Phil quickly; and Leuw grunted approval.

"Oh! I forgot," said Phil suddenly during supper. "Dulcie wants to be specially remembered to you."

"Does she?" asked Leuw off-hand, wondering whether his flush looked as hot as it felt.

"And Effie wants to know you badly," continued Phil.

That, of course, led to an account of Effie, and Phil

became rather fluent over her. Leuw gave ear contentedly because Effie implied frequent allusions to Dulcie. It was rather a second-hand sort of business, he told himself; but it was better than nothing.

"Oh! yes, I'll come to see you, when I've got on a bit more," he said all at once, and apropos of nothing in particular. It sounded rather strange, and he asked himself angrily when he would get rid of the stupid habit of thinking aloud.

All next day it poured in torrents; but none of them minded. Phil, indeed, was rather glad, because it served him as an excuse for not parading himself, a thing he had anticipated with some apprehension. And, besides, the discomfort without made the room seem cosier, and sent the sense of their reunion tingling more gratefully through the hearts of its occupants.

Leuw alone saw Phil off to the railway station on the latter's way home.

"Good luck, Phil," said Leuw.

"God bless you, Leuw."

And as they gripped hands, the same thought struck them both, that this was not merely an ordinary leave-taking. They were doing more than bidding each other good-by; they were saying farewell to each other's childhood. So far, although they had taken themselves so seriously, they had only played at life; but now they had once and for all stowed away their toys in the great lumber-room of the world, the past. And the moist-eyed smile they exchanged at parting was the fittest legend they could write on the sign-posts of their ways: Regret for what they had lost and the compensating hope of the many things they had to strive for and to gain.

PART II

CHAPTER XV

THE world had become six years older. It was contended on many hands that it had also become a little wiser. There remained, however, a few people who still did foolish things. Among them was Mr. Diamond, who had committed a most reprehensible folly in forgetting the existence of his wife and acting on his own initiative. Pondering this in his divided mind, he was slowly wending his way home from a meeting of the Synagogue Committee, of which he was a respected member. It was at this meeting that, in a moment of misguided independence and false enthusiasm, he had allowed himself to be prevailed upon by his colleagues to be nominated as Bridegroom of the Law, because no other candidate could be found.

This Bridegroomship of the Law is an office which, in every Synagogue, falls to the lot of one man for one day in the year, to wit, the Ninth of Tabernacles, more specifically termed the Rejoicing in the Law. The office is one of honor and distinction, and carries with it an accumulation of synagogal privileges. In the first place, the holder of it is accommodated with a seat in that exalted stronghold of communal dignity, the warden's box, with accessories in the shape of two fronting bouquets and an obsequious beadle ever on the watch to open the pew-door to his exits and en-

trances. Secondly, he walks close behind the Reader in the procession of the Scrolls, and finally, he is the object of a highly complimentary preamble—most trying to a man of modesty or humor—by which is prefaced his call to the reading-desk to hear the cantillating of his portion. This portion, as befits the occasion, is the most epoch-making of the year, for it consists of the concluding verses of the annual Pentateuchal Cycle, and the intoning of it winds up with a decorative vocal flourish and a vociferous response. However, as a set-off against these glories, there are certain drawbacks attached to the Bridegroomship, of which Mr. Diamond was uncomfortably conscious, and the enumeration of which he could safely leave to Mrs. Diamond.

As he wiped his feet on the mat outside the sitting-room, he devoutly wished he could resume life half an hour hence. Then his peril made him rise to a great stroke of policy, and instead of the hangdog abjectness that had usurped him ever since he had come to a proper understanding of his trespass, he entered with a show of suppressed triumph.

"Becky, my dear!"

"What's the matter, Diamond?" asked "Becky, my dear," calmly.

Mrs. Diamond had not changed much since her last appearance. The glasses she used for darning Diamond's socks—"he has such flat feet, you know, and treads them out at heels so quickly"—were a size stronger, and her Thursday-morning voice was still more incapable of modulation; but otherwise she was much the same, and Mr. Diamond knew it.

"Well?" she prompted, as she saw him struggling with his make-believe emotion.

"Becky, my dear, the Synagogue people have paid you a splendid compliment."

"What's that? Asked me to preach them a sermon on good manners and charity and . . ."

"Not exactly, Becky, my dear. But they have elected you Bride of the Law."

"Diamond, you know I object to your round-the-corner ways. Now what is it?"

Mr. Diamond was treading himself viciously on the toes; then he stammered:

"Well, Becky, my dear, if you're Bride of the Law, what would I be?"

Mrs. Diamond doffed her spectacles, stripped the half-darned sock off her arm and looked business-like.

"What would you be?" she repeated. "Surely you haven't let 'em talk you into it?"

"Talk me into it?" cried Mr. Diamond, eagerly. "I suppose you think it went begging. You ought to know what a rush there was for it. Preager and Tannenbaum said they would—but I mustn't tell you what goes on in the Committee."

"Mustn't you?" asked Mrs. Diamond significantly.

"Said they would give up their seats, because it was their turn, and—look what a great honor they paid me that I was picked out after all, Becky, my dear."

"And pray, who asked you to go hunting after any honor?" began Mrs. Diamond, ominously calm. "Don't you know you've got a wife that gets more honor and respect than we can manage between the two of us? And how does she get it? On the cheap; that's where the cleverness comes in. Any fool can get himself made a fuss about, if he only spends

enough money on it. See if you won't get us sold up one of these days through your ungodly boastfulness, and then you'll find out how much your honor will fetch in the open market. But don't flatter yourself you're going to have it all your way, because you won't."

"I didn't expect I would, Becky, my dear," assented Mr. Diamond humbly; "but really it won't cost us as much as you think."

"Won't it? Perhaps you won't have to offer half a guinea in the Synagogue, and if you happen to be on the deaf side of the beadle, he'll fancy you said a guinea."

"But, Becky, my dear, I couldn't think of offering anything under a guinea."

"Then the beadle will fancy you said two. That's item number one. Now, what about the party? I suppose we'll have to order in a small brewery for the day. Or, do you think Preager and Tannebaum'll be too proud to drown their disappointment at your expense?"

"I'm quite sure they won't be," replied Mr. Diamond with a naïveté that was positively touching. Mrs. Diamond shot him a withering look before proceeding:

"And then you'll want a new suit of clothes."

"And you a new dress, Becky, my dear," added her husband, without the least trace of an afterthought.

For a moment Mrs. Diamond paused, taken aback; then the subtle nefariousness of Mr. Diamond's last remark came home to her, and stirred her to righteous indignation.

"Oh, you want to bribe me, do you? And a new

dress'll do the trick, will it? If I want a new dress, I'll wait till that dunder-headed Committee of yours makes you a Bridegroom of the Law, will I? Next, I dare say, you'll want me to ask them permission when I want to buy a penn'orth of salt or a packet of hair-pins, eh? If I was you, I'd beg 'em kindly to take over the managing of this house altogether, and put me on weekly wages. Diamond, when *shall* I be able to make something like a man of you?"

"I give it up," groaned Mr. Diamond, miserably huddling in the arm-chair.

"So do I. If only I'd taken Uncle Toby God-rest-his-soul's advice. Didn't he always say—said Uncle Toby—God-rest-his-soul—when he used to see the way you used to poke your head in at the door when we were courting, 'Becky, my girl,' he said, 'never marry a man that comes into the room half at a time. He'll never do the right thing in the right place.' And I'm blest if you ever did."

"Becky, my dear, not even when I married you?" asked Mr. Diamond with melting reproach.

"Yes, you did, just that once; and then it was more through luck than sense. And now you're going to do it a second time. Get yourself a sheet of note-paper."

Mr. Diamond went to the writing-case with alacrity. He had no idea what the note-paper was for; but at any rate it created a diversion, and that was good enough for the time being.

"And now you'll just write to the wardens and say it's off," directed Mrs. Diamond.

Mr. Diamond shrank back. He had not bargained for this. Of course, he had expected that his better

half would fume and rage and altogether behave disagreeably; but he had not for a moment thought that she would not give in at the end. It was dreadful. After solemnly pledging his word and receiving advance congratulations, he was now to show up as a perjurer and a renegade. But the worst of it was that the true cause of it would be divined. Now, he did not mind his wife's little tyrannies so long as they were confined to the precincts of the family circle; in fact, he would have regarded their absence as a violent breach in his normal existence. But he strongly objected that his domestic ignominy should fringe out into town talk. It never struck him that he had figured for years as the typical Mr. Henpeck of the neighborhood. Such are the saving powers of a proper self-respect. And now this letter was to give the game away. One hope he had, but that was knocked on the head by Mrs. Diamond's next words:

"Now, hurry up, because I want to post it myself to see that it really does go."

Groaning inwardly, Mr. Diamond took up the pen.

"Are you going to dictate?" he asked.

"Of course. Start writing date and address, and I'll just think a minute. Now, then. Say as follows: 'This is to inform you that I refuse to be Bridegroom of the Law, and I consider it a great shame to talk a man into something before he's had a chance of asking his wife.'"

"But, Becky, my dear, I can't write that," cried Mr. Diamond, his hair on end.

"Oh yes, you can, have a good try," said Mrs. Diamond encouragingly.

It was then that the heaven-sent inspiration, which proverbially waits for the eleventh hour of human dis-

tress, took pity on Mr. Diamond and flew down to his aid. Why must he follow his wife's dictation? thought Mr. Diamond. She might dictate what she pleased, and he might write what he deemed fit. The Rejoicing in the Law was still ten days ahead, and greater miracles had happened than for a woman to change her mind in ten days. And even if she did not, it would be too late to cry back and—well, even the devil cannot catch the hindmost, if the hindmost is too quick for him. In any case it gave him over a week's respite and to Mr. Diamond's procrastinatory philosophy that was worth any risk.

"Well, when you've done chewing that pen-holder," Mrs. Diamond broke in on his ruminations.

"I was only thinking how to put the letter into shape," said Mr. Diamond speciously.

"But I don't want you to put it into shape. I want them to have it plain and plump, and no extra compliments—understand what I mean?"

So Mr. Diamond wrote. Mrs. Diamond added another trenchant sentence or two, calculated to make the wardens review their past life, and find it a concatenation of black iniquities. Mr. Diamond set it all down with great complacency—much too great to escape Mrs. Diamond's suspicions. She took up the letter, and pretended to regard it with infinite displeasure.

"It isn't at all nicely written, considering it's to go to the wardens."

"It's nice enough for the nasty things I've said to them," replied Mr. Diamond bitterly.

"That's not your business. I'll just trouble you to make another copy of it."

Shrugging his shoulders, Mr. Diamond obeyed. Mrs. Diamond took up both copies, compared them, and put the first into the addressed envelope and the second into her pocket.

Mr. Diamond watched her mysterious proceedings, looking, though not speaking, his question.

"I'll get somebody to read it to me to-morrow morning—to see if you've put it word for word," she answered him.

Beyond one short galvanic shudder, Mr. Diamond felt nothing. His nerves were killed for the evening, and he was numbed to all further emotions.

"I'm going to bed, Becky, my dear," he said dispassionately.

"No, you won't. You'll wait till I come back."

And then Mrs. Diamond went out to post the letter. She took it to the pillar-box at the corner, and slipped it through the crevice. But the instant it was leaving her fingers, a sudden idea shot through her that made them dart after it frantically. It was too late, however. The letter rested snugly at the bottom of the box. The next collection was not till midnight; it was now half-past nine. Gathering up her skirts, she waddled back as no woman of her dimensions had ever waddled before.

"That comes of your flustering and flurrying me like that," she broke in on her husband.

"I flurried you?" stammered the latter.

"Of course you did. If you hadn't been in such a rush with that letter, I should have had time to remember about Mrs. Duveen."

"Remember about Mrs. Duveen?"

"To ask her down to the party. It would have

been a first-rate opportunity; she wouldn't have had the face to refuse this time. Why didn't you mention it to me?"

"You never let me mention anything, Becky, my dear," replied Mr. Diamond.

"None of your impertinence, Diamond; you'll wait up till the postman comes round to collect, and ask him to give you back the letter."

This was Mr. Diamond's supreme moment. "It isn't necessary, Becky, my dear."

"What d'you mean?"

"If you'll be good enough to let me have the copy you've got in your pocket, I'll tell you."

Mrs. Diamond handed it to him with a docility which at another time would have appeared uncanny to Mr. Diamond. Then, planting himself on the hearth-stone, he cleared his throat, and with a voice that made the brass chandelier ring, he read as follows:

"To the Wardens of the Peace-pursuing Brothers of Plotsk Synagogue. Gentlemen, I write to confirm what I said at the meeting. Namely, that I shall be glad to accept your nomination for Bridegroom of the Law. On informing my wife of the same, she was overwhelmed with joy. And wishes to express her thanks for the honor you have heaped upon us. Likewise I shall do my little best in what concerns the offerings. Which is only as it should be on such an occasion. And beg to remain your obedient servant Lazarus Diamond."

There was a momentary after-vibration of the chandelier, which Mr. Diamond could have sworn sounded like an Amen.

"And you really dared to write that?" asked Mrs. Diamond, after a pregnant pause.

"Dared? Why it was only the right thing in the right place—wasn't it?"

Mrs. Diamond looked at him from head to foot as one might a perfect stranger. Then she said, half in wonder and half in triumph:

"Diamond, I believe I'm making a man of you after all!"

CHAPTER XVI

EARLIER that very evening Leuw Lipcott sat in his counting house, though to call it such was rank flattery. A man-high partition, with a square foot of glass pane fitted in at the upper end, so as to permit a look out into the shop, the whole a piece of very bad workmanship, for it was Leuw's own—such were the offices of Messrs. Donaldson & Lipcott, where the purely clerical matters of the firm were attended to. But even this make-shift was better than the back parlor with its litter of wood splinters, feathers, and cardboard wreckage, not to mention the glue and the paints, which notoriously have a born passion for attaching themselves where they are least wanted; and Leuw objected strongly to getting his folios smudged.

It was the last day of the month, and in accordance with the immemorial custom of the firm, the accounts were being made out by Leuw, with Christopher seated close to him, dividing his wonder between the cryptic columns of figures and Leuw's sure, self-confident manner of handling them.

"Turnover better by nine pounds, eleven shillings and eightpence farthing than last year this month," announced Leuw, having come to the end of his calculations.

Christopher shook his head. "I can understand the pounds, the shillings, the pence," he said slowly, "but what beats me hollow is how you manage to get at that odd farthing."

Leuw laughed cheerily. "I don't think we'd have got on like this, if we hadn't looked after that odd farthing," he replied, closing the book with a bang.

"Yes, we have got on a bit, ain't we, Leuw?" said Christopher wistfully.

"And we'll have to get on-ner. Remember I'm a householder on my own now."

"Well, Leuw, my boy, I've let you have your way mostly in everything. Try as hard as you like for yourself."

"Then what about setting up our Mineral Water Factory?" asked Leuw smilingly.

"There you are again; I tell you it isn't time yet for launching out so big. Steady does it. But, of course, if you're so stiff on it, I can't prevent you. After all, you've got as much to say here as me and—God knows when the say'll be yours altogether.

"Christopher!" cried Leuw reproachfully.

This Mineral Water Factory, as well as several other suggestions of Leuw's for the expansion of the business, had been moot points between him and Christopher for some time past. Leuw saw many a chance of adding to their profits, but Christopher, with the caution of old age, was loath to leave the beaten tracks of their routine; and though Leuw at times managed to extort from him a quasi-consent, he felt bound to look upon it in the light of a downright refusal. But he never grumbled—not even to himself. Each time that old Christopher—he was indeed old Christopher now—expressed his objection, Leuw was recompensed by the thought that, by submitting to him unconditionally and putting shackles upon his own desires, he was paying off a tithe of

gratitude to the friend to whom he owed so much. And far from being a vexation of soul, his rebuffs became to Leuw a taste of the sweetness of self-sacrifice.

"Now, let me put you into your overcoat, and come along," said Leuw a little later. "Mother told me particularly to bring you home for the house-warming. She couldn't possibly do without you."

"No, thanks, not to-night, boy. Want to nurse myself this evening. I feel a bit shaky."

"We'll nurse you all right—better than you would yourself. We'll walk slowly down to the High Street, and take the tram right to the very turning. It's only the second house from the top."

But Christopher persisted in his refusal. "I'm only a stranger, and you'll want to be by yourselves the first evening; and your brother is coming down, too, you say. Ask me again in a week or two."

With that Leuw had to rest contented. He went out to put up the shutters—they had agreed to close an hour earlier to-night—and came back to what now served old Christopher not only as workshop but also as sitting and bedroom. The upper chamber, which had combined the purposes of the latter two, had become a year ago a magazine for stock, to the great satisfaction of Christopher, because it implied growth of business, and much more, because by a bad arrangement, over which he had no control, the staircase seemed to lengthen out just at the time when his breath became considerably shorter.

"Then I'll just make you comfortable for the evening," said Leuw. And in a twinkling the floor was swept of its litter, the glue and paint-pots had disappeared into their cupboard, and the grate blazed up

high with added fuel, for Christopher now always imagined he felt cold, and nothing but the sight of a fire, even in the summer, would counteract his fancy. Leuw pulled up the arm-chair, of which he had made Christopher a present on his last birthday, put the kettle on, and dished up the supper of cold meat, bread, and pickles. Then he fetched out the bottle of rum, and sliced up a lemon, for now that Christopher had definitely discarded his pipe, with recurrent maledictions on that nuisance of an asthma, he was reluctantly compelled to resort to a glass or two of hot rum to woo the sleep which otherwise fled his eyelids. It was a sad day for the old man when he had to strip his buttonhole of its blue ribbon. It was to him as though he had lost caste.

"I don't think I've forgotten anything," said Leuw, looking round him.

"Don't think so either. Who ever knew Leuw Lipcott to forget anything?"

Leuw smiled his pleasure at the compliment. "Then, till to-morrow," he said, his hand on Christopher's shoulder.

"Yes, and be careful to walk into the house right foot first. Ah! I forgot you don't believe in those things."

"No, but I believe in doing what you're pleased at. That's why it'll be right foot first."

It was now Christopher's turn to smile his thanks, on which Leuw made his departure. Usually it was a smile of Christopher's that was taken to act as the full stop to the day's proceedings.

Leuw swung down the street as if he owned it and a few more besides. Why should he not feel buoyant?

The world had gone, was going, well with him. Certainly, in the five years that had passed he had not spared himself. But the strenuousness and the striving, the battling through summer's heat and winter's cold, the obstinate wrestling with the malignant power of untoward circumstance had not gone for nothing. From the very start Leuw had made his influence felt in the business. It began to move slowly. Although Christopher showed himself adverse to any radical departure from old-fashioned methods, he readily countenanced any attempt of Leuw's—and of these each week saw at least one—to develop the concern on more legitimate lines. So it was that Donaldson & Lipcott—for Leuw had yielded after the first year to old Christopher's importunities, and had allowed his name to figure over the shop door—Donaldson & Lipcott, let it be known, had advanced from a tenth-rate retail house to the position of wholesale agency and distributing centre to the neighborhood. It supplied goods to at least a dozen of the little trumpery-stores that played at being shops, and somehow the reputation of the firm for fair dealing and cheapness had taken root among the itinerant hawkers and barrow-mongers for a mile round. And as a matter of fact, it was not very long before Leuw had discovered the sinful uselessness of the middleman, and had gone straight to the manufacturers for his supplies. Once he was even bold enough to suggest to Christopher the advisability of opening negotiations with Germany, but the latter had flouted the idea as being too venturesome, and, moreover, savoring to some extent of a want of patriotic sentiment. It was out of sheer disappointment at the rebuff that

Leuw that same afternoon obtained by personal canvass the contract to furnish with toys and sweetmeats for its periodic treats an Elementary School, to which, in the course of time, he had added four others.

With his success grew Leuw's self-respect, which, however, he took good care did not degenerate into a smug self-complacency. It manifested itself chiefly in the sense of incongruity between the sordidness of Narrow Alley and his possession of a balance to his credit at the Post Office Savings Bank. And so, when, three weeks ago, he informed his mother that he had rented a house in a respectable side-turning off the Mile End Road, at sixteen shillings a week, Mrs. Lipcott expressed no surprise; for she had long since left off wondering at anything that Leuw did. It was quite three years ago that she had given up the menial drudgery of the wash-tub, and if she now occupied herself in the more dignified department of needle-work, for which she stood in great demand among her former patrons, it was only at her own earnest entreaty to be allowed a pastime. The removal from Narrow Alley had taken place two days before. The new furniture, of course, had necessitated some blood-letting of the Savings Bank account, but Leuw had early come to a correct view of money as a means to an end, as the servant and not as the master. He had confirmed the correctness of his view by the pleasure it had given him to see the loaded van pull up and discharge itself piece by piece into the new home. When he had left for business that morning, everything stood in its right place, and the final touches could be safely delegated to his mother. And now, as he inserted the key into the house door, his heart

beat as high as that of any monarch on first entering into his kingdom.

His mother came running out into the passage. Silently he embraced her. And that was all which the two considered necessary—they wondered it was so much—in the matter of mutual congratulation.

"Phil come yet?" asked Leuw, stepping into the sitting-room.

"He wrote he wouldn't be here before eight," replied Mrs. Lipcott, looking at the new clock for the twentieth time that day—with an unwonted but comforting feeling that she could tell to a hair's breadth at what rate the world was moving.

Leuw utilized the interval for a critical inspection, while Mrs. Lipcott descended to the area-kitchen, where the hissing and broiling hearth-range claimed her, and where, from its place of honor, the old copper kettle shone upon her with melancholy pride at being the sole surviving relic of a departed order of things.

It was not till twenty minutes past eight that a rat-tat, which could only be Phil's, brought them both to the door.

"Couldn't find the place," Phil explained his lateness, after exchanging greetings. "Seemed so funny to have to knock at the house door to be let in to you—they never went in for knockers and rarely for house doors in Narrow Alley, you will remember. Pretty little cottage this." And then, sinking his voice, he continued: "Who lives downstairs?"

"We do," said Leuw.

"And the top floor?"

"The same!"

"And this floor?"

"The people that live top and bottom," replied Leuw with a twinkle.

"What! you don't mean to say you keep the whole house?"

At that Leuw's twinkle developed into a hearty laugh, in which Mrs. Lipcott joined, though in her case it presently became hushed, and she took to fumbling vaguely at her apron; then she did some hard blinking, and her eyes saw clear again. She might well feel moved to pride that overflowed into thankfulness. It was some time since she had seen her two boys together, and now, after the long interval of comparison, each seemed to set the other off to better advantage. Phil had grown tall—he stood half a head higher than Leuw—and on the lithe, straight frame poised the student's face and forehead with the clear-cut profile and sensitive mouth and the soft dreamy eyes, which, however—one suspected—could look very hard and wide-a-woke once the brain behind them had set out in pursuit of the goal to be attained. The air of delicate refinement about him stood out well against, and at the same time accentuated, the sturdy strength of Leuw—of Leuw, cast altogether in a heavier mould, with his extensive ridge of shoulder, which he carried as though in veritable challenge to the burdens of life. The features at first glance appeared commonplace, showing nothing of the inner man, until one got a hint from the square-hewn chin, and noted, with a start almost, the absolute neutrality of the eyes that made their owner a sphinx which kept its own counsel, and would never let you know how much it knew of yours. A contradictory

face it was, formidable, and yet sterlingly honest and making it depend, as it were, on the state of your conscience, which of the two you were to consider it. And as Mrs. Lipcott's glance passed from Phil to Leuw and from Leuw back again to Phil, she knew that, however little of the credit might belong to her, it was with a good heart that she could hold her face up to the world and call herself a mother.

With true housewifely pride, Mrs. Lipcott dragged Phil off to point out to him, one by one, the glories of the well-appointed kitchen, and then handed him over to Leuw, while she laid the table for supper in the adjoining breakfast-room. Phil followed Leuw over the remainder of the house with a persistent silence, which Leuw, as a natural conclusion, set down to astonishment.

But when Phil spoke next, his voice sounded anything but surprised.

"Why didn't you tell me about all this before?"

"Why, what difference would it have made?" smiled Leuw.

"Oh, not much. Besides it was quite a selfish sort of reason that made me ask the question."

"Selfish?"

"Well, it would have saved me worrying about you, and kept my thoughts more steadily to my work, had I known."

"That never struck me," stammered Leuw, taken aback; "and I thought you'd guess."

"Of course I guessed; but that's what I complain of. I never dared to guess as much as this; and now, when I ought to be wringing your hand off in congratulation, I can only feel like a fool that's been jolly well hoaxed."

Leuw was still floundering about for a reply, when Mrs. Lipcott called up the staircase informing them that everything was ready. Silently the two descended.

"Well, I never—what a spread, mother!" exclaimed Phil cheerily.

Leuw at once noticed the change in Phil's demeanor, but the change gave him little satisfaction, because it was only too obvious that it was mainly due to regard for their mother and not for himself. He grew painfully perplexed. It almost humiliated him to find Phil in a mood he could not understand.

"I hope you've kept yourself hungry for it," said Mrs. Lipcott.

"I've tried to, but you mustn't mind if I don't quite come up to your expectation."

That he certainly did not, and it was a wonder to Leuw how persistently he kept up his good humor and genial flow of talk beneath Mrs. Lipcott's pressing remonstrances. It was plain that Phil had determined to make the occasion the success it deserved to be, at whatever cost to himself. And Leuw's gratitude made him feel the brotherhood between them as he had never felt it before.

"I may start residence at Cambridge in a fortnight," said Phil presently.

"What! so soon?" came from Leuw and his mother.

"I needn't for another twelvemonth, but what's the use of wasting time? The day after to-morrow I'm going up for my entrance scholarship. It will depend on my getting it."

"Leave something for the other chaps—there's a good boy," jested Leuw.

"Let the other chaps look after themselves," replied Phil with a truculence hardly called for by Leuw's jest.

It was the plea of having to "put in" another hour's reading before bedtime that obtained Phil permission to cut his visit much shorter than usual. At first, he seemed inclined to make a further departure from custom by refusing Leuw's company to the station; but Leuw, for the first time that evening, asserted his old ascendancy, by just putting on his hat and preceding Phil into the street.

"What's the matter, Phil?" he asked abruptly, as soon as they had fallen into step.

"I knew you were going to ask that," replied Phil, "and that was why I didn't want you to come."

"And now I've come, you may as well tell me."

"Well, you saw what was the matter. Wasn't I bad-tempered enough?"

"You seemed a bit snappy with me," said Leuw quietly.

"That's where you are wrong. I wasn't quarreling with you at all; I was quarreling with myself."

"Yes, I suppose that's very annoying, to feel keen on a good old row and have nobody to answer you back."

"I'm not joking, Leuw. And do you know why I am angry with myself?"

"No, but you're just going to tell me."

"Because I'm jealous of you, Leuw, I'm horribly jealous of you."

Leuw stopped in amazement. Then, "Phil, what do you mean?" escaped him.

"I mean that you've done such a lot and I nothing at all, and I'm only a year younger than you."

"Goodness me—where's the lot I've done?"

Phil looked at him keenly. "I know it isn't vanity that makes you ask that," he replied slowly. "You don't want me to sing your praises. But what's the meaning of all I've seen to-night?"

"The meaning? A few years of honest work with a stroke or two of luck thrown in. That's all. And how about yourself, Mr. Grumbler?" continued Leuw, checking Phil's reply. "What about those dozens of prizes and things you've pulled off? What about being the youngest head boy your school ever had? That's nothing, of course. And just let me tell you, the way you got your little lot is better than mine, because it's all honest work, and flukes don't count in your line of business. The difference between the two of us is, that I'm contented with what I've got, because I know there's a lot more to come, and can wait for it, and you—well, you're cross with to-morrow because it isn't to-day."

"No, Leuw, that's not what makes me discontented," said Phil soberly. "It's the thought that however much I may do, I'll never be able to give myself a single 'thank you' for it. Take yourself. Whatever you've done, you needn't deduct any discount off it, and make it so cheap that it's hardly worth anything. Goodness! how proud it must make you feel to look at what you've got and say it's all through you and for you. But what I've got is all through and for a stranger—the dearest woman, God bless her, that ever was, next to mother—but a stranger all the same. And to get it, I bartered away the only legacy father left me—his name. Leuw, I'd exchange all the scholarships I've ever had or

am likely to have, for the privilege of having bought a single quartern loaf for mother—I hardly dare to say *my* mother.”

Leuw heard him out patiently, and then shook his head.

“No, Phil, you don’t put the case properly at all. In the first place it’s all bunkum about my belonging lock, stock, and barrel, to myself and owing nobody. Where would I have been, if old Christopher hadn’t come my way, and held me up under the arms till I had learnt to stand on my own feet, if needs be? But that’s the worst of you studying chaps; you’ve only got to be touched with a finger-tip, and you wriggle.”

“Perhaps I *am* too sensitive,” admitted Phil; “most of us Jews are that, you know.”

“Well, a lot of prodding makes you rather tender,” continued Leuw, “but that’s hardly to the point. You call yourself names because you weren’t independent and all that sort of thing like me. If you had been, you bet your boots you wouldn’t have been alive at all. Supposing you hadn’t got your chance in the nick of time, what would have happened? Very likely you’d have gone in for the same thing as me, and have worried yourself dead knowing that you weren’t suited, and were only making a hash of yourself. Or else, not being able to withstand your natural liking, you’d have plodded on killingly at the game you’re now playing nice and comfortable, and have knocked your brains out trying to get through a brick wall. Now, what pays better, especially for us Jews, to get a leg-up to the top or to trudge your own weary way down to a cropper? And what concerns father’s legacy, as you call it---that’s all right.

As long as you put some shine into the name of Jew, dad won't mind what particular name the Jew goes by."

Phil pondered Leuw's words for a minute or so. "You know what?" he said finally. "It seems to me that I've lost even more than I thought by leaving home."

"Why! what have you lost now?"

"Watching you make progress. I've got to know dozens and dozens of fellows during my time at school—rattling fine ones, some of them, I can assure you. But I don't think the lot of them together have taught me the things that one doesn't get from books half as well as you might have taught me them. Now that's a compliment, Leuw, but I stick to it."

"Compliments are only compliments when you can take them with one hand and pass them back with the other. And I take yours, Phil," said Leuw gravely.

"It took me a long time to understand," went on Phil; "but it's clear as daylight to me now—your refusing to come up to Aunt's all these years. Do you know, I set it down to sheer pig-headedness or some stupid sort of sulks. Instead, you were only nursing your self-respect, sort of waiting till you might meet them equal to equal. And that's what you meant by your 'It isn't time yet.' Am I right, Leuw?"

"Yes, that was pretty well my idea of it."

"Well, as for me, I can't help fancying that if anybody sweller than I had only held their finger up to me, I shouldn't have bothered much about self-respect, and have walked straight into their parlor, and sat down in their best easy-chair. But you—oh! I did feel annoyed last prize-day, when you hid right

at the back of the hall, and rushed mother off as soon as you could, only to get out of Aunt's way, I suppose. She was awfully disappointed; and as for Dulcie—she made me fag all through the crowd to look for you. She said she didn't believe I was two inches taller than you, and she wanted to see for herself."

Leuw turned his head from Phil's reproachful glance.

"It was grand, Phil, grand," he replied, ignoring Phil's main point, "to see you stand up there before those hundreds of people, and hear you rattle off that long speech without turning a hair, and all the other boys cheering the roof off for you each time you walked on to the platform to get the medals and the books—I tell you, Phil, you bought mother her quartern loaf that day."

"Do you think so?" asked Phil anxiously.

"A quartern and a half, Phil. And you said she—what's her name, Dulcie, sent you to look for me—for us—why, fancy, here we are at the station."

"Of course, I shall let you know at once how I've got on," said Phil.

"You may as well tell me now," said Leuw.

Phil laughed, and Leuw regarded his laugh as an achievement. He still did not quite know what to make of Phil's behavior, and would have considered it no explanation to be told that he had for the first time come into contact with the artistic temperament.

But what he considered more inexplicable still was that the little lady whom he had once offended by calling her gloves mittens should think it worth while after all this time to make sure that he was two inches shorter than Phil.

CHAPTER XVII

"NEVER mind, Effie, dear—they'll be all right. Don't cry any more," said Dulcie.

"I c-can't help it," sobbed Effie.

"Let's put our hair up and play at being 'out,'" suggested Dulcie.

"How could I, Dulcie? With papa and mamma gone away for six months all the way to Australia, and papa looking so white and poorly; and oh! Dulcie, I feel so frightened about what I said a few weeks ago."

"What was that? I don't remember."

"Yes, you do. The day I pinned that wool monkey to the back of Mademoiselle's jacket, and she walked out into the street like that, and all the people laughed at her, and she came back in a dreadful paddy, and gave notice, and papa threatened he'd send me to a boarding school. . . ."

"Oh, yes," broke in Dulcie, "and you said that rather than go there you'd run away, and ask them to take you in at the first orphan asylum you came across."

"It's that orphan asylum that frightens me," gulped Effie. "Suppose God took me at my word? Do you think He might, Dulcie?"

"I don't think so, but to be on the safe side you might stop crying a moment or two and pray He 'shouldn't.'"

And while Effie is acting on her friend's suggestion,

the opportunity may be taken to explain that four days ago Mr. and Mrs. Elkin had started on an extended sea journey, because the former's health had broken down suddenly. Effie, without having her wishes consulted in the matter, had been left behind in charge of Mrs. Duveen, for Mrs. Elkin desired to bestow her whole and undivided attention on her invalid husband, without having to give toll of it to that wayward fifteen-year-old of hers. And now the latter was unbosoming her grief at the occurrence in the seclusion of what had been set apart for herself and Dulcie as a school-room, after solemn assurances from both that they would not look upon the arrangement as a heaven-sent opportunity for indulging in a bacchanalia of idleness.

"I feel much better now," said Effie, after a pause. "I know why I was taken like that to-night—because everybody's out, Auntie Duveen paying visits, and Uncle Bram said he'd come early, and he hasn't, and Phil gone up to Cambridge to try for that scholarship of his. . . ."

"But I'm here," interrupted Dulcie.

"You? You're only another me, and that's exactly what makes it sad and lonely twice over."

Dulcie was dubious whether or not to construe this into a compliment; then giving herself the benefit of the doubt, she remarked:

"If I feel sad, I like to be quite alone till I have felt it all out of me."

"Oh! different people have different ways of doing it," replied Effie, with an assumption of great wisdom.

"My way is as good as yours, though, I should think," said Dulcie.

"There's nothing like having a good opinion of yourself," said Effie loftily. "I should call yours a jolly rotten way."

"Effie! You know it isn't ladylike to talk slang."

"I'll talk anything I like. I'd talk French to you, only you're such a dunce you wouldn't understand it."

"Not your French, I don't suppose. So you needn't try."

"Of course, you always must have the last word," flung Effie.

"That's better than having the first—in a quarrel," retorted Dulcie.

"Anyway, you haven't got much manners; else you'd remember I was your guest and got to be treated politely."

Dulcie gave a gasp and looked at Effie. Effie saw the look of contrition start over the other's face, and the next moment a miniature cannonade proceeded from the two closely pressed mouths.

"Dear, dear, now we've quarreled again, and we promised Phil we wouldn't any, any more," exclaimed Effie, flinging the straggling strands of gipsy hair back into their place; "but it does feel so lovely making up again afterwards—doesn't it, Dulcie, dear?"

"And I only kept it going so that you might forget a bit about your papa and mamma."

"Oh, you dear!"

"And that's a good enough reason for Phil not scolding us for not keeping our word."

"I'm sorry I didn't keep my word; but who cares about Phil's scolding?"

"I do; and you as well. You know you do."

Effie opened her lips mutinously, and, shutting them again on second thoughts, averted her head.

"You know, Effie," said Dulcie confidentially, "when I've done anything wrong, I feel more afraid of Phil than I do of mamma."

"Yes, that's because his way of scolding makes you so uncomfortable. He doesn't call you any names, and he doesn't use spiteful words, but he just looks at you—at me, I should rather say—with such a God-forgive-you sort of face that I feel I ought to pack up my things and go to boggy without saying good-by to any one. I knew he was a goody-goody the first time I saw him."

"He isn't a 'goody-goody,'" flared up Dulcie; "he made eighty-seven 'not out' for his school the last cricket match of the season."

It was not quite so obvious how that disproved Effie's allegation, but Effie seemed to accept it as a repudiation, for she said:

"That's true. Still, I don't see why you should get so indignant about it. You used to hate him in the beginning. You told me so many a time, you know."

Dulcie colored. "Only because I was a little fool," she said; "and now I'm making up for it by being proud of him all I can."

"Oh, why didn't mamma get hold of an elder brother like that for me?" broke out Effie suddenly, with an angry stamp of her foot. "Nobody ever gave me what I really wanted. Sometimes I try for hours at a stretch to fancy myself a boy, so that I might feel what it is like to be my own brother."

Dulcie laughed a little, but immediately resumed seriousness when she saw Effie meant what she said.

"Still, I haven't kept him all to myself; I've let you have a fair share of him, haven't I?"

"That's what makes it worse. It's like accepting charity. Oh! Dulcie, you're ever so much better than I am. If he were mine, you could have broken your heart, and I wouldn't have let you have even his little finger. Dulcie, stop your ears while I say it: once or twice I could almost have hated you for having to be grateful to you. Am I not wicked?"

"Not wicked, only very proud," replied Dulcie, a little disconcerted by Effie's vehemence; "but then, of course, it isn't your fault that your papa comes from those old Jewish—what do you call them? Oh! yes, *Hidalgos*."

"Not my fault?" echoed Effie with glistening eyes. "And perhaps you think I blame him for it? Why, I'd sooner be a Spanish Jewess than an English duchess, though it isn't such a bad thing to be that. Oh, they were a grand lot! I've read all about them—every word. You know, Phil once wrote an essay about them, and I got hold of it on the sly. And when he came to describe how they were burnt before all the people—well, I could almost smell the burning flesh. . . ."

"Ugh," interjected Dulcie.

"And could hear them singing 'The Lord is King,' with their last breath—oh! it was fine. You don't know how sorry I am I wasn't born in those days," went on Effie with rapturous regret, "just for the glory of getting burnt at the stake and having essays written about you. Now I can just imagine myself walking along in the procession! I bet you I'd have made the Grand Inquisitor so angry that he wouldn't have given me any brushwood, so that I might frizzle longer. And I should have enjoyed it tremendously—especially the procession."

"Yes, but didn't they have to wear sugar-loaf hats, and long robes with things painted on them?" Dulcie reminded her.

Effie's face fell. "Oh, I forgot that. That wouldn't have done at all. You can't look very stately and dignified with a sugar-loaf hat on your head and colored little devils crawling all over your dress, can you?"

"Not very," agreed Dulcie.

"And that's I think the real reason why some of the women pretended to turn Christian," said Effie with conviction.

Dulcie, however, was thinking of something else.

"But it's a good thing to be proud; I wish I were."

"What makes you say that?"

"Then, perhaps, I should leave off sending people messages when they don't answer them."

"Dulcie, you haven't been writing love-letters?"

"Effie, how can you say that!"

"Well, then, why make so much mystery?"

"I didn't make any mystery. I told you each time I did it. About Phil's brother, you know—asking him to come and see us."

"There you are again, with Phil's brother. That's all you seem to think of."

"I don't," cried Dulcie indignantly; "I don't think of him for months at a time. It's only when I happen to hear mamma telling Uncle Bram about the poor people she's been to see down the East End that I remind myself of the time—twice it was—when mamma let me come with her, and how sorry I felt for him with his thin cheeks and peaky mouth and patched elbows. . . I only want to meet him once more, just to see whether he still looks so hungry."

"Well, why don't you ask Phil?"

"What! ask Phil whether his brother still looks starved?" cried Dulcie, aghast.

"No, I don't suppose he would like it," conceded Effie hastily. "But I wouldn't worry any more about the other one; he can't be up to much, or he wouldn't keep on hiding himself like that. I dare say he's become a cobbler's boy or something equally grand, and goes about all day with a greasy apron and a dirty face."

"Perhaps it is as you say, Effie; but I do hope he isn't a cobbler's boy," said Dulcie fervently; "for Phil's sake," she added as an afterthought.

Her uncertainty on the matter was natural, considering the fact that Phil, acting on Leuw's instructions, only referred to the latter's occupation in vague and general terms; and the recollection of this, recurring to Dulcie's mind, tended to add a darker hue to her misgivings. It made her very sad. She wished with all her heart that she could get herself to believe in Leuw Lipcott. She would even have preferred to know that he spurned her overtures for further acquaintance out of pure dislike for herself, rather than out of a sense of his own unworthiness. She would have preferred it—for Phil's sake, she told herself.

A vigorous tug at the street bell roused her from the meditations into which she had drifted.

"Auntie Duveen," cried Effie.

"No, she doesn't ring like that—it's Uncle Bram," said Dulcie.

"I say, Dulcie, while I think of it, you won't tell Phil I've been crying such a lot?"

"Of course not."

"Nor that I read his essay on the sly?"

"Unless I want to own up about myself as well," smiled Dulcie. "Where do you think I got to know about the sugar-loaf hats?"

A resonant "ahem" outside the door precluded a further interchange of confessions, and sent the two flying into the arms of the entering Uncle Bram. The part of him that received first attention was his pockets.

"Now, then, you thieves—I shall have you up for highway robbery," he exclaimed, looking ludicrously grim and bristling, but standing stiff as a statue to facilitate the process of overhauling. Effie and Dulcie squeaked delighted defiance at his anger, and flourished their booty—pink square boxes tied with rose ribbon—provokingly in his face. Such was usually the routine of Uncle Bram's entrance.

"Pay up immediately—no credit given," he commanded. And he had no need to play the dun; the two mouths settled promptly.

Then, having put himself back into tolerable shape, Uncle Bram asked: "Any letter or wire from Phil? Jane said she didn't know."

"Nothing since last night," replied Dulcie, not very distinctly.

"H'm," grumbled Uncle Bram, "if I had known that, I shouldn't have hurried so to get back."

"Oh! that's why you promised to come in early, did you?" pouted Effie. "Then you can go away again."

"And come back with more chocolates, eh? Oh! the ingratitude of this world," said Uncle Bram sorrowfully to the ceiling.

"Then don't make uncomplimentary remarks," retorted Effie; "we're as good as Phil any day, though we may not be half so clever!"

"Dulcie, won't you protect your poor old uncle against these cruelties?" groaned Uncle Bram.

"Certainly not—you deserve them. But you can have a caramel if you promise not to do it again."

And what could Uncle Bram do but swallow the caramel—for which he had a cordial dislike—as a tacit guarantee of good behavior? He had long ago come to the conclusion that it would be useless to attempt to revolt against his self-imposed oppressors. But even thus he could not resist the folly of trying to wreak upon them a cruel revenge.

"To-morrow evening begins the Feast of Tabernacles," he said reflectively.

"Yes, and we're going to help to decorate the Synagogue Tabernacle," cried Effie.

"Like we did last year and the year before," added Dulcie proudly.

It may be stated for the benefit of the uninitiated—if only in illustration of the tenacity of the Jewish character—that the forty years of wanderings in the wilderness are commemorated even now, after the lapse of a score and a half of centuries, by the erection of wooden foliage-roofed structures—symbolic tents. As a compromise for those whom lack of space or inclination forefends from attaching such a one to their homes, there exists, adjoining most places of worship, a congregational building, in the beautification of which the lady relatives of the more prominent members take a special delight. Hence the futile fiendishness of Uncle Bram's plan.

"I presume you are aware that I'm the warden of our Synagogue," he continued with affected guilelessness.

"Of course," replied Dulcie; "that's exactly why we get permission to make ourselves useful."

"That's exactly why to-morrow you will not get permission to make yourselves useful," mimicked Uncle Bram.

"What do you mean? You can't stop us," said Dulcie.

"Can't I? I shall simply give Mr. Brown, the caretaker, strict orders not to admit you."

Dulcie laughed out derisively, but Effie, somehow, seemed inclined to take the matter more seriously.

"And you know what I will do?" she said, planting herself formidably in front of Uncle Bram. "I'll sneak out while the service is on, and pull everything to pieces—I will."

Dulcie plucked her furtively by the sleeve and whispered:

"Don't Effie; don't you see he's only joking?"

"What! Uncle Bram, you were only joking?" asked Effie with a naïveté which ought to have warned everybody who only knew her a quarter.

But Uncle Bram, the simpleton, took her in good faith and guffawed hugely.

"In that case, he's got to be punished for frightening us," continued Effie, affecting a great indignation. "Dulcie, what is he to buy you?"

Then Uncle Bram saw the trap into which he had been lured, and, though he struggled heroically, he was not let off before having been mulcted of a "Daniel Deronda" for Dulcie—all for her own self,

with her name on the fly-leaf—and an album of Brahms for Effie. Possibly it might have gone much harder with him, were it not for the arrival of Mrs. Duveen, who was known to object to such exploitation of her brother. Her first question was about news from Phil.

"I can't understand it," she said disappointedly; "he must have written last night. Ah! here it is," she exclaimed as the perennial Jane brought in a letter on a tray.

"That's not from Phil," said Effie, though she was furthest off.

"Oh no, it isn't," cried Mrs. Duveen, almost dropping it in her vexation. "From whom can it be? Oh, dear, it's from that Mrs. Diamond," she went on, her vexation now tempered with amusement. "Invitation cards for something: 'Mr. and Mrs. Diamond request the pleasure of your company on the occasion of their being Bridegroom of the Law,'" she read; "and here's another for you Bram—to the Treasurer of the Synagogue Union, and another to Miss Dulcie and Master Phil, and a four-page letter to all of us—what on earth are we to do, Bram?"

"Go, of course," said Bram; "you know she won't leave us in peace till she has dragged us down to her house."

"I suppose so," agreed Mrs. Duveen resignedly; "so let's start at making up our minds to it at once. Oh! what a nuisance—and I kept away as long as possible to give Phil's wire more chance of coming."

"Don't fidget like that, Rose," said Uncle Bram. "Surely Phil can be trusted to take care of himself."

"I am not thinking of that, Bram, but I'm afraid

it's a bad sign. He said the papers were looked through immediately, and the result known the day after; that's to-day."

"Phil's never missed anything he's gone in for, and he'd be so disgusted to break his record," chimed in Dulcie.

Effie said nothing, but her face bore a curious expression of consciousness, which, however, no one remarked; and, of course, it never struck anybody to ask whether it was something more than good eyesight that made her so pat in declaring that the address on the letter just received was not in Phil's handwriting. Then they all went down to dinner, during which Mrs. Diamond's invitation came in for more detailed discussion; Effie proved herself vastly entertaining by giving excellent imitations of that good lady's more pronounced peculiarities, whereat even Mrs. Duveen could only exclaim, "Don't Effie," and laugh. But despite the merriment many an anxious glance was cast at the mantle-piece clock, and when it struck nine, a general air of resignation settled down upon the room.

A minute or two later the door opened, and Phil stepped in with a "Good evening, all you people. Don't look so frightened. I came in through the area-door."

"Well?" came a shout from Mrs. Duveen, Uncle Bram, and Dulcie.

"He's got it," said Effie calmly.

"Yes, I've got it right," laughed Phil; "and I'll have some supper, too, if you don't mind."

"Oh, you naughty, naughty boy," exclaimed Mrs. Duveen, reproachfully; "why didn't you wire? We should have known it hours ago."

"I thought you might prefer me to be my own messenger," answered Phil, a little awkwardly, perhaps.

"You weren't born with that hat on, were you?" jested Uncle Bram.

"Oh! I beg your pardon," said Phil, removing it, and at the same time looking at Effie, who nodded intelligently. Phil made a rather spasmodic supper, because between his mouthfuls he had to answer at least three questions concerning his first impressions and experiences of the "Varsity," as he insisted on calling it on every possible occasion; nor did the marvelous additions to his vocabulary, such as "dons" "gyps," "commons," "bed-maker," "oak-sporting," and other academic technicalities, fail to produce the due effect of awe on his wide-eared listeners. Altogether this was a different Phil to the one of only four days ago. He had brought back with him an air of assurance, of manly nonchalance—his very voice seemed to have become deeper, fuller; and Uncle Bram was debating with himself seriously whether or not he ought to offer him a cigar.

"When do they expect you up?" asked Mrs. Duveen.

"Next Monday week," replied Phil.

"And you won't be sorry to get rid of us commonplace people, eh, young man?" asked Uncle Bram genially.

Phil's face assumed a very serious look—much more serious than the pleasantry warranted—as he answered:

"Indeed, I shall, Uncle Bram."

"And then he'll soon be back here again; term only lasts eight weeks," said Effie, proud of being the first

to remember the mitigatory fact. But it seemed strange that Phil, who surely was cognizant of it better than anyone, should have omitted to adduce it, and stranger still that, now it had been pointed out, he should let it pass without corroboration. Nay, more—he appeared embarrassed, and Mrs. Duveen noted it.

“There, don’t worry him any more,” she said, “or we’ll never get him to tell us anything again. It’s our turn now to give him a sensation.”

And glad of the wherewithal to create a diversion, she produced Mrs. Diamond’s invitation.

“Will you come?” asked Effie anxiously.

“Certainly, if you’re all going,” replied Phil.

“Then we may as well answer at once, and set the poor soul’s mind at rest,” suggested Uncle Bram; and Mrs. Duveen agreed.

“And I’m going to see that you don’t forget to mention we are going to bring Effie,” said Dulcie, following them out into the library.

Effie and Phil remained alone with a somewhat strained silence between them that made the room look twice its size. Presently Effie got up, humming a snatch of song, a little out of tune, and walked over to the piano. The music-stool seemed strangely refractory, because it required a good deal of handling before it would stand properly in the centre.

But she had only got through the opening bars of a furious allegro that sounded horribly out of keeping with the preceding stillness, when she jumped straight off the stool, came over to where Phil was standing watching her, and looked at him hard.

“So you kept your word,” she said.

"Of course I did. Didn't you think I would?"

"No, but I wish you hadn't."

"Why! I thought you wanted to . . ."

"Yes, yes," came the querulous reply; "I wanted to be mean, as mean as mean could be, and you oughtn't to have let me."

"I'm very sorry," said Phil, half at random.

"It didn't strike me till I saw how terribly Auntie Duveen fidgeted," continued Effie. "If I hadn't been such a miserable coward, I should have gone up to her and said: 'It's my fault. I made him promise not to write, because I wanted to know the result before anybody else did, if only a second earlier, and if he keeps his hat on when he comes in, it means that he's got it. And for the sake of just one second, I'm giving you hours of agony.' It was like a—like a conspiracy. Oh, Phil, why didn't you tell me of it?"

Phil looked past her. "I did want to tell you," he quavered; "but you were so sad and wretched at your father and mother having gone away, and I thought it would please you if I agreed to what you asked—it did please you a little, didn't it?"

Effie nodded mournfully.

"And then, for another thing," added Phil, his voice quite steady, "you deserved to know first."

She lifted her eyes in wonder. "Deserved it? How?"

"I don't think I should have done such good work if I hadn't known you," replied Phil, his tone once more unsteady.

Effie shook her head pensively. "I can't imagine how I made any difference."

"I can't either," said Phil readily, "but I fancy it

was my listening to your . . .” and Phil jerked his head in the direction of the piano.

“But I never saw you listen,” said Effie.

“Did you look?” asked Phil with a smile.

Effie hesitated. “Well, yes, I did look,” she replied finally, “ever so many times; and you just sat there reading away for dear life, it seemed like, and for all you cared I might play myself dead.”

“In fact, you thought me stone deaf.”

“I thought you awfully rude, and so I was ditto, and never asked whether I was disturbing you.”

“No, Effie, it was not dittoness that stopped you from asking; it was a bit of unconscious reasoning,” said Phil, springing the phrase on her cautiously. “You argued with yourself that if you had been disturbing me, I should have taken myself off to my room.”

“But you never asked me to play,” said Effie, a little inconsequently.

“You might have refused. One never knows how to take you.”

“That means you can never tell whether I’m going to be nasty,” said Effie ruffling.

“Or nice,” added Phil; “and I had to protect myself. I should have felt so hurt at the other thing.”

Effie’s great eyes became greater. “Would you?” she asked. “I never dreamed you noticed anything I said or did.”

“As much as what other people said or did!”

“Only as much?” asked Effie anxiously.

“Well, a bit more. I don’t mind telling you, now that we aren’t going to see so much of each other.”

“No,” said Effie regretfully, continuing with more

cheerfulness: "but, of course, there are holidays—vacations, you call them, don't you?"

"I don't know about the vacations," said Phil, quite gruffly.

"What d'you mean you don't know?"

Before Phil could answer, descending footsteps informed them of the return of the three letter-writers.

"What shall we do about the—the conspiracy?" asked Effie hurriedly. "Shall I tell?"

"I wouldn't; at least, it will pay Aunt better if you don't."

"How's that?"

"Because now we'll have to love her harder to make up for the wrong we've done her."

There was a harshness in Phil's tone that struck Effie as strange and unnecessary; but before she could investigate its cause, Dulcie had bounded into the room, followed, more leisurely, by the two others.

"Don't look so anxious, Effie," said Dulcie; "we didn't forget to mention you."

Effie shrugged her shoulders ungratefully. Having disposed of the "conspiracy" question, her mind had reverted to Phil's mysterious hint anent the vacations. She remembered that he owed her an answer; but whatever it might be, she would have to claim it on a future occasion, for Mrs. Duveen pointed warningly to the lateness of the hour. To the surprise of everybody, Effie submitted without the customary skirmish for an extension of time, and only Phil guessed the truth: this was the first item in her scheme of reparation.

The departure of the two girls was followed at no long interval by that of Uncle Bram.

"I'd like to pat you on the head," he said at parting, to Phil; "but I suppose you would consider that an insult—so here's instead."

Phil's fingers closed cordially over the extended hand of the other, so cordially that Uncle Bram could not forbear to repeat once more, this time half in earnest, a boast he had formulated some time ago jestingly:

"Your masters may have taught you a lot of Latin and Greek, but I have taught you a thing which is quite as valuable in life—how to shake hands properly. So long, boy."

When Phil came back into the room he found Mrs. Duveen comfortably ensconced in an arm-chair.

"What, going to make a late night of it, Aunt?" he said with a gaiety that sounded forced.

"Well, we have a rather important point to settle," replied Mrs. Duveen, "and we may as well get done with it as soon as possible. I mean, of course, your allowance at Cambridge."

Phil's eyes dropped, and he had to clear his throat before he replied: "No, Aunt, that matter is all settled. My sizarship is worth a hundred a year, and then I shall have a leaving exhibit of sixty from the school."

"Yes, I know," said Mrs. Duveen unsuspectingly, "because I have enquired. It can be done on one hundred and sixty, and less, perhaps, but there is absolutely no reason why you should stint yourself. Above all, I am anxious that you should get the full benefit of the social side of the University life. And that costs money."

"Still I shall manage all right on what I've got of

my own," said Phil with a curious persistence. Mrs. Duveen looked at him in wonder.

"I don't understand you, Phil," she said helplessly. Phil returned her glance very steadily as he replied:

"Let me explain, Aunt. I don't think it's right of me to accept your help now that I can stand by myself. You can easily find a better object for the money you want to spend on me. If I took it, I might perhaps be robbing somebody else."

Mrs. Duveen's hands moved nervously in her lap; her mouth was very tense. "I think you are right, Phil," she replied quietly. "No doubt it will be to your advantage to start as early as possible training yourself in habits of independence. I am sorry—I ought to have thought of it before."

"Well, you see, Aunt," said Phil eagerly, "it never struck me till the other day when I went to see Leuw and mother in the new home. You don't know what Leuw has done; he has simply done wonders, all single-handed, or nearly all. It has made a man of him, too."

"Yes, I dare say he's a good example to follow," said Mrs. Duveen, yet more quietly than before—almost in a whisper.

"It will help me tremendously to know I've got nothing to expect from anybody but myself," resumed Phil quite buoyantly. "Of course, the first few vacations they will have to keep me on trust. . ."

Mrs. Duveen sat up as though stung. "Keep you on trust? Who?"

"I forgot," said Phil in confusion. "I ought to have told you that when I come back to town I intend to live at mother's."

Beyond paling a little, Mrs. Duveen showed unmoved as she said:

"Yes, you ought certainly to do that."

Phil kept silent, disconcerted at the ease with which he had won what he had looked forward to as a hard-fought struggle.

"It would be bad for you to remain in surroundings that will remind you of a time when you did not expect everything from yourself," added Mrs. Duveen gently.

Phil started. So the fight was not yet over; perhaps it was only beginning. At any rate, he had his first wound.

"Don't think me ungrateful," he said humbly; "I shall never forget what you have done for me."

"This isn't a question of gratitude," replied Mrs. Duveen with apparent calm; "it is a mere matter of exchange. You have given me good value in return for anything I may have done for you. During the six years you stayed under my roof you added greatly to my happiness. You made me forget the afflictions I have suffered more easily than I should have done otherwise, and at best I could only look upon you as a loan, never as a gift. There has always been a tacit contract between us that the arrangement should terminate as soon as one or the other of us grew tired of it. I could guarantee for myself, but I was ever ready for the moment, which had to come sooner or later, when your heart would drag you back to your own people, when you would resent the attempt of a stranger to filch a tithe of the affection you ought to bestow elsewhere without discount or deduction. No, Phil, I repeat that no consideration of gratitude ought

to make you waver in your decision. I admit cheerfully the balance of advantage was on my side."

Phil was nonplussed; Mrs. Duveen's attitude was so foreign to that which he thought natural in her under the circumstances.

Greatly to his surprise, he felt something like anger steal over him.

"There, wasn't I right?" he said almost bitterly. "I only mention the idea of my leaving you, and you show yourself perfectly satisfied; you don't make the slightest effort to keep me back. Why, you simply seem to jump at the chance of getting rid of me."

Mrs. Duveen's face flushed slightly—hope had breathed upon it. She was meeting an extreme situation with extreme measures, and it seemed she had achieved something already.

"My dear Phil," she said with an uncertain smile, "if this were only a ruse of yours to test my appreciation of you, I should have seen through it and answered differently. But you have made it too plain that you regard your relationship to me as a yoke, and then you expect me to give away my pride by asking you to go on wearing it. When all is over between us, I want you to think of me with respect."

The words were measured and dispassionate—not even the sharpest ear could have detected the heartbeats that pulsed furiously behind them. Phil stared before him in baffled bewilderment. What was he to do now? He wanted her to remonstrate, to oppose his project tooth and nail, so that he might have an opportunity for arguing and convincing—not her, but himself, that he was right. But above this unquestioning acquiescence of hers, the inmost voice

of his conscience rang out with terrible distinctness. It did not flatter him; it dwarfed what he had dignified with the name of a great and noble resolution into its true proportions as an act of ignoble thoughtlessness. That surely, it told him, was not the stuff self-reliance was made of. True manliness did not consist in trampling down, but in stooping lovingly over obligations that held up silently appealing hands. And that was what galled him most. She did not want his gratitude; nay, rather than humble herself by accepting it, she pretended that she owed him thanks. And then his heart spake out, and asked him why he had brought upon it the agony of cold words that cut like knives, from lips whose merest breath had healed and comforted, had wafted the balm of tender solicitude. There was only one way of putting an end to such questions, and he took it.

"No, Aunt," he said, coming close to her and speaking fiercely, "you ought not to have asked me to stay. You ought not to have said a single word; you should just have pointed with your finger to the door."

"I don't know whether I should have done it dramatically enough, and besides -you might not have understood," replied Mrs. Duveen, smiling tremulously.

"For heaven's sake, Aunt, don't smile at me, or you'll make me blubber, and I could never forgive you for that. Why should you smile at me? For wanting to throw you away like an old glove and telling you of it as unconcernedly as if I were asking you to pass the mustard? Oh, Aunt, if you would only say to me, 'Phil, you little cad,' I should consider it the highest compliment you've ever paid me."

"No, I can't flatter you so much as that," said Mrs. Duveen, still smiling despite Phil's protest; "but I'll make a compromise and say: Phil, you five foot ten and a half inches of stupidity, don't you see that all this had to come one day or another? In fact, I should have been disappointed if it hadn't; I may almost say alarmed. You are only passing through your phase of discontent and revolt, like all men of normal constitution; in your case it comes a little earlier, but then you always were precocious. But you can hardly be held responsible for whatever shape the outbreak may assume."

Phil bit his lip gloomily. "That's right," he said, his eyes downcast, "go on making apologies for me. Why don't you say straightway I have behaved like a saint and a gentleman? But I'll tell you what my 'outbreak'—it sounds quite nice like that—has done for me, and it couldn't have done anything better: it knocked me off my little pedestal with a crash. Of course, you didn't notice I was getting as conceited as Lucifer—you never do notice anything about me that you can't make a copy-book text out of. I was getting to think my'self such a decent and a self-righteous fellow that with a little more thinking I should have grown into the awfulest prig that ever defiled God's earth. You see? Some good is sure to come out of anything you are mixed up with."

"Hush, Phil," said Mrs. Duveen, wan and haggard, for the strain had told terribly. "You must forget all about it. If you think you owe me an apology, I will let you off with what you just said."

"But you will admit that I have more cause to be grateful to you than you to me," demanded Phil, almost threateningly.

"Why should I want your gratitude when I have you?" came the fearless reply.

The first thing, next morning, Effie got Phil into a corner, and heckled him as to what he meant by his reference to the vacations.

"Not much," replied Phil; "only, like most boys, I thought I could grow into a man overnight."

CHAPTER XVIII

THERE are probably few men or women so meek and lowly-minded but have, at one time or another in their existence, felt themselves the hub of the universe, if only for a minute, an hour, a day. With Mrs. Diamond, whom even her best friend could not accuse of being meek and humble-minded, the sensation lasted for a week, to wit, the eight days dating between the receipt of Mrs. Duveen's acceptance and the actual occasion to which it referred. It really showed remarkably well for her powers of endurance that she survived fancying herself for all that time the very essence of things cosmic. Contemporary occurrences of every shade and size, floods, earthquakes, wars that changed the geography of the earth, the overthrow of cabinets, phenomena physical and metaphysical, became merged and centred within a circumference that could be measured by inches, and she took it all smilingly. Hardly smilingly, though, for the bull-dog, don't-stop-me-I'm-in-a-hurry expression with which she shouldered her way through her errands would have made the Himalayas open a tunnel for her. Having long ago convinced herself that no one could do things half so well as herself, she jealously usurped every item of preparation, except the most menial tasks, in the execution of which she kept a Cerberus eye on Mrs. Saffron, who had succeeded Mrs. Lipcott as her familiar spirit-in-ordinary. Any offer of assistance from sympathetic neighbors was gruffly

refused as a shameless device to put in a claim for an invitation; and the affair—Mrs. Diamond could not repeat it sufficiently often for her gratification—was to be strictly select. Of course, the one who suffered most severely under this order of things was Mr. Diamond. He felt as in a city under military law; the strictness of régime made him almost afraid to breathe, and smoking had been interdicted as a matter of course. When he came home from work, tired and hungry, his wife set before him, instead of the greatly-desired dinner, some novel idea that had struck her during his absence, and on which he had to expend his last remaining strength in mustering up a fictitious admiration. He could not sit down without being trodden on; he could not stand up without being swept from one room into another; and yet any suggestion of his to “go across the way” was strongly resented, because, as Mrs. Diamond once told him under great provocation, she did not see the reason why she should nigger herself to death while he went about gallivanting; or—thus she corrected herself in a tenderer moment, just after Mr. Diamond had handed her the five pound note by which she exceeded her original estimate—because she wished him to be on the spot at all available times in case there was any occasion to appeal to his judgment. And Mr. Diamond swallowed the barefaced fiction, fervently desiring that it were a plump veal chop instead.

But, although he tremblingly refrained from any attempt at initiative, all mistakes of commission and omission were promptly put down to his account. Thus, for instance, in the midst of an amiable discussion—of course, it was really a monologue—on the

desirability of engaging a professional pianist for the evening, Mrs. Diamond's brows suddenly contracted with a jerk that made her husband hold tight to his chair.

"And now you've forgotten somebody, Diamond," she said, eyeing him with disfavor.

"I dare say I have," said Mr. Diamond, anxiously accommodating, "but I had an idea you had thought of everybody we could think of."

"Then what about the Lipcotts?"

"Quite right, Becky, my dear. It'll be nice for Phil to meet them."

"Very nice. And that's enough reason for you to waste two extra suppers, eh? Oh! you clever man. Now listen, the way I look at it is this. That boy Leuw, who you thought was going to turn out such a blackguard . . ."

"I thought?"

"You thought," iterated Mrs. Diamond, and the argument proceeded no further. "That boy Leuw is going to be somebody one of these days, and if we don't get in with him while he isn't, it's a chance lost. Dear! dear! Diamond, when will you learn to see further than your nose?"

So it came that the Lipcotts were asked to the "select affair;" and Leuw, on being told so by his mother, laughingly declared that they had now received their patent of nobility, and the least they could do to show their appreciation of the unexpected compliment was to adopt the invitation card as a coat-of-arms.

It always struck Mrs. Diamond regretfully, when in after times her memory harked back to the matter,

that, out of the very abundance of her opportunity, she had neglected to taste, to the fullest, the exhilaration of those great days. It seemed to her a shocking waste of good material. For example, she ought to have thrilled considerably more on seeing in the columns of the "Jewish Examiner"—she could spell printed matter painfully—among the list of Bridegrooms of the Law for the various Synagogues, the name of Mr. Lazarus Diamond. She remembered having noticed with great satisfaction—but not with sufficiently great satisfaction—that the lengthy nomenclature of Mr. Diamond's Synagogue had necessitated a lapping over of the line, which in a way made him stand out distinct and prominent among the other figurants in the list. She blamed herself for not having tried hard enough to imagine how the "Mr." would have looked with the addition of an "s," by which she would have come within easy distance of realizing the great ambition of her life—that of having her name chronicled in the public press. There was, however, one incident which she never divulged, and the memory of which she laboriously thrust from her mind. This was a certain interview with the editor of the above "Examiner," in the course of which she had suggested that a reporter should be lodged in her house for the day, in order to take full and accurate notes of the proceedings, to which suggestion the editor had courteously replied that he did not think the occasion of sufficient communal interest, but that he would have much pleasure—he thoughtfully did not say profit—in inserting a home-made account at the usual advertisement rates.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon of the day of

days. The warden's box, the bouquets, the laudatory preamble, the procession of the Scrolls—all the glory and triumphs of the Synagogue ceremonial were things of the past. Mr. and Mrs. Diamond were seated at what they anachronically called breakfast—alone. The “alone” implies a bold departure from custom, which only a person of Mrs. Diamond's standing and strength of mind dared permit herself. For she had relegated the spread, by which the Bridegroom of the Law is expected to signalize his office immediately after the morning service, to the evening program—converting into additional prestige for herself an act of prudent economy, by the explanation that she had to do so out of compliment to certain high-placed friends of hers, who had expressed a strong desire to do her honor by their presence at the function.

“I don't know how you can eat so heartily—I couldn't touch a thing,” said Mrs. Diamond.

“I'm very sorry, Becky, my dear,” said Mr. Diamond, leaving it doubtful whether he was expressing regret at the greatness of his own appetite or the smallness of his wife's.

“Not that I say you don't deserve a good breakfast,” continued the latter; “you went through it all beautifully.”

“Thank you, Becky, my dear,” said Mr. Diamond, a little half-heartedly. He had hungered for many a day for a word of praise from his wife, and now that it had come it sounded as if it were addressed to a performing dog.

“I do hope the evening will go off all right, and the Duveens will come down in their carriage,” remarked Mrs. Diamond with piously folded hands.

Mr. Diamond professed to echo the wish by sighing as he loaded another fried sole on to his plate.

"Now hurry up with that, because you've got to—you know what. I'll just go into the kitchen and look after Mrs. Saffron."

And Mrs. Diamond swept out of the room with a rustling and a crackling of her new dress of stiff brocade, which gave one the idea that she would momentarily burst into flame. The "you-know-what" must have been something distinctly unpleasant; for it killed the last vestiges of Mr. Diamond's appetite so completely that, by the time he had half finished his sole, he fancied he was eating his way through a whale. As a matter of fact, the reference was to the speech which Mr. Diamond had composed, at the dictation of his wife, and to the delivery of which in the evening he looked forward as the most terrible ordeal of his life. Yesterday he was nearly word-perfect, and now he dreaded approaching it again, for fear of finding that the excitement of the morning had unraveled the laboriously stitched seams of his memory. With a groan, the burden of which he divided impartially between his speech, his wife, and his Bridegroomship of the Law, he walked to the chiffonier, took out the manuscript, and began to zig-zag the room in the achieving of his desperate task; and each time he passed the arm-chair, which yawned at him its soft-cushioned enticements, he did not know whether to call himself martyr or hero.

An hour after, Mrs. Diamond came back and took him in hand for rehearsal. She knew the speech from beginning to end, only from hearing him read it twelve times—a fact she pointed out to him in proof

of what the human mind can do if backed by a little intelligence; only she did not put it so nicely. Mr. Diamond got on much better than he had expected, perhaps because his wife played upon his receptiveness by endearing phrases like:

"Diamond, if you disgrace me to-night, I shall get a divorce!"

About four o'clock a merciful diversion arrived in the shape of Mr. and Mrs. Preager, followed immediately after by Mr. and Mrs. Tannenbaum. Their early appearance was justified in the first place by the intimacy of their acquaintance with the givers of the feast, and secondly, by their having obliged with the loan of cutlery and crockery, in recompense for which they thought themselves entitled to a fair length of start in the sampling of the good things provided. But perhaps it was only a fit of absent-mindedness that made Mrs. Preager help herself to the almonds and raisins with one hand while untying her bonnet with the other. Mrs. Tannenbaum, however, showed herself possessed of superior method.

"I can see who arranged the table like that, Becky," she insinuated delicately.

Mrs. Diamond accepted the tribute to her artistic instinct with becoming silence, while Mrs. Tannenbaum felt herself impelled, by the intensity of her admiration, to take stock of the individual beauties of the table and to improve her favorable impression of sight by that of taste. Thus she could, in all decency, run the gamut of delicacies, from cheese-cakes to Spanish olives and back again.

"Now let me have a good look at you Becky," she continued. "I didn't have a chance of it in the Syna-

gogue because—well, I don't care who knows it—because I simply couldn't take my eyes off your Lazarus."

"Did you hear that, Mr. Tannenbaum?" exclaimed Mrs. Diamond, skilfully mingling mock indignation and delight in her voice.

"I did, but it's no use her trying; she can't make me jealous," replied Mr. Tannenbaum genially. "My best respects, Mrs. Diamond."

"You'll never get me to believe you only paid three and six a yard for that brocade," broke in Mrs. Preager austere.

The idea of Sadie Tannenbaum, with her fifty-five years on that dumpy back of hers, carrying on a flirtation with her husband over the heads of self-respecting folks!

"May I spend in doctor's bills anything it cost me more. I must say, though, it was only a remnant," admitted Mrs. Diamond.

"And the cut of it," observed Mrs. Tannenbaum, cheerfully ignorant of being credited with a dumpy back. "It looks, well, it looks for all the world as if it had been photographed on to you."

Mrs. Diamond contemplated with great complacency as much of herself as her eye could take in.

"And so comfortable, too," she said. "Fancy wearing a dress for the first time and feeling as if you had never worn anything else—you understand what I mean." Then her voice fell as she continued: "But joking apart, my dears, I did feel proud of him to-day. I never had an idea he was really such a fine figure of a man."

"I don't know how it was," said Mrs. Tannenbaum

thoughtfully, "but one minute he reminded me of Tannenbaum and the next of the Prince of Wales."

"You don't say so, Sadie," exclaimed Mrs. Diamond, almost aghast.

Mrs. Tannenbaum affirmed that she certainly did say so, and what was more, she meant it. Possibly she did, though the possibility dwindled to a mere shadow in the light of certain confidences exchanged earlier in the day between Mrs. Preager and Mrs. Tannenbaum. From these it was to be gathered that Mr. Diamond's bearing in the warden's box and in the procession was that of a dyspeptic coal-heaver, while "Becky's" dress was enough to throw the tailoring trade of all England into disrepute.

"How much a quart did you pay for that cherry-brandy, Becky?" asked Mrs. Preager innocently.

"Never mind as long as it's paid for," replied Mrs. Diamond, taking the hint and filling three glasses.

"At your house, in joy," said Mrs. Tannenbaum to Mrs. Preager, to which Mrs. Diamond added: "And may it be soon."

Mrs. Preager sighed and sipped at her glass, sighed and sipped again. Of course, she understood the particular drift of the toast. She was the mother of six marriageable daughters, and was likely to remain so.

"Don't fret so much, Julie," said Mrs. Tannenbaum consolingly; "everybody can't have the luck, like myself and Becky, to be mother-in-laws before we got over our surprise at being mothers. You know how scarce young men are."

"Scarce?" asked Mrs. Preager with a sneer. "The trouble is there's too many of 'em. That's what makes the girls pick and choose nowadays. When we

were young, we weren't half so hard to please, were we, Sadie?"

"Speak for yourself, if you don't mind," replied Mrs. Tannenbaum, icily.

Mrs. Diamond saw it was necessary to pour oil on the troubled waters betimes. "And then, some girls are much too fond of their home to leave it," she said.

"My girls certainly have as good a home as they can wish for," said Mrs. Preager with dignity.

"Perhaps you mean that mine hadn't," suggested Mrs. Tannenbaum, bridling.

"There, mention a tail and the devil thinks you are speaking of his," quoted Mrs. Preager.

"Will you have something else, Sadie?" asked the hostess to change the subject.

"Yes, Beckie—I'll have my mantle and bonnet, if you please."

"Nonsense, Sadie," ejaculated Mrs. Diamond.

"My mantle and bonnet, *if* you please," iterated Mrs. Tannenbaum very loudly, pitching her voice in the direction of her husband. "Izzy, we are going. Don't forget your umbrella, like you always do."

"What's the matter, my darling?" enquired Mr. Tannenbaum, rising in great perturbation and coming over to the ladies. He hoped sincerely his ears had deceived him; the Diamonds were really doing the thing handsomely—threepenny cigars and all. He had made up his mind to stop till he had smoked a dozen of them, and here he was only half way through his first. Meantime Mrs. Tannenbaum was explaining to him what the matter was; simultaneously Mrs. Preager did the same to Mr. Preager, and Mrs. Diamond to Mr. Diamond. After that each

of the six turned on the remaining five to put the case from a strictly unprejudiced point of view; and as no one contradicted the other, all considered themselves admittedly in the right, and this effectually smoothed the way for mediation. As a matter of fact, nobody, except Mr. Tannenbaum, who was for a moment demoralized by the great issues at stake, had felt the slightest apprehension as to the ultimate outcome of the occurrence, which precedent had shorn of all significance. The only one genuinely affected was the cherry-brandy; for, having been the primary cause of the collision, it was only right, on the homœopathic principle, that it should be made to act as peace-maker. The three gentlemen settled back to their discussion, which, after naturally dwelling for some little time on the uncertainty of the feminine temperament, reverted at length to its staple topic—communal politics.

"I'm going to propose at the next Committee Meeting that the prayer for the Royal Family should be said all in English," remarked Mr. Preager, who was notorious for the heterodoxy of his views.

"Why not propose to have an organ in the Synagogue? That would make more noise," replied Mr. Tannenbaum, with overt sarcasm.

"Or that the ladies should sit downstairs with the men—then there would be still more noise," added Mr. Diamond, hazarding a deeper thrust.

"You may sneer," said Mr. Preager, not the least bit disconcerted, "but I know what I am talking about. You remember, of course, we had a policeman at the Synagogue entrance last night to keep the place from getting too crowded." Messrs. Diamond and Tannenbaum remembered.

"Well, later on in the evening, I was standing outside my door when he passes on his round. 'How did you like our service, officer?' I says to him. 'Oh! all right,' he says, 'only what do you want to drag the Queen in for, and call her names in that break-jaw lingo of yours?'. Of course, I explained to him that we were praying for her Majesty's long life, and he answers it didn't sound like it and walks off, winking his eye and saying he belonged to the police and not the marines." Mr. Preager stopped in order to let his words filter into the minds of his listeners, who were evidently impressed.

"Now, why should we lay ourselves open to a risk like that?" continued Mr. Preager, striking while the iron was hot. "Instead of getting the credit we deserve for our loyalty, we may find ourselves one fine day had up for high treason."

"It never struck me the thing could be made to look so serious," confessed Mr. Diamond, genuinely concerned.

"Nor me," echoed Mr. Tannenbaum.

"But what is to be done?" went on Mr. Diamond. "You know the trouble we had to teach our Reader to say the few words in English. 'Our gracious Majesty' took him a week; 'Albert Edward' a fortnight; 'the Princess of Wales' a month; and 'all the Royal Family' he can't say to this day."

Mr. Preager pretended to give the difficulty his serious consideration; then he lifted his head high, on the impulse of a sudden idea, as it were.

"But why should he recite it at all?" he enquired. "If it comes to that, I don't mind doing it myself."

Mr. Diamond exchanged a quick glance with Mr.

Tannenbaum. There it was—the cloven hoof. Mr. Preager had not been half subtle enough. It was known that his pet hobby consisted in usurping the functions of the Reader on every possible occasion. Unfortunately for him, this happened also to be the pet hobby of Mr. Diamond and Mr. Tannenbaum, as well as of every member of the congregation. It arose from the aboriginal human instinct to attain to prominence; and the elevation of the Reader's desk went some little way towards it.

"In any case I've been a seatholder longer than you, so where do you come in?" asked Mr. Diamond.

"And I only wish to remark that I'm senior to both of you," came from Mr. Tannenbaum.

"Yes, but don't you think I deserve something for the suggestion?" submitted Mr. Preager suavely. "Now, what if I hadn't found out from the policeman . . ."

"Are you quite sure you didn't dream that policeman?" broadly hinted Mr. Tannenbaum.

"I beg your pardon, Tannenbaum," remarked Mr. Preager stiffly, but coloring up to his ears.

"I didn't mean anything of the sort," apologized Tannenbaum vaguely. "Only you know your memory goes wrong sometimes. How do I know? Well, one week-day at the beginning of this year I came into the Synagogue, and found you were reading prayers, because, you said, it was the anniversary of your mother's death. Three months after, you were reading prayers again, and again it was your mother's anniversary. I wished you long life and said nothing. A fortnight ago you read again, and for the third time it was your mother. Now, either you had

three mothers, or your one mother died three separate times, which is a thing that doesn't usually happen. You see, all I want to show is that you can't always trust your memory. I don't mean anything else, God forbid."

"Then in plain English you call me a—a confudler," said Mr. Preager with great apparent self-control.

"There you go again," replied Mr. Tannenbaum, quite hurt. "Now just to show that I don't suspect you in the least, I'll call in evidence. I say, Mrs. Preager, did a constable talk to your husband last night at your door?"

"Certainly not," replied Mrs. Preager, vehemently indignant at what she considered an aspersion. "How could he be standing at the door when he was fast asleep on the dining-room couch all the evening?"

Mr. Tannenbaum said nothing, but turned on Mr. Preager in smiling enquiry.

The latter, however, instead of collapsing, returned Tannenbaum's glance frankly and unabashed.

"Well, I'm glad I only dreamt it," he said, knocking the ash off his cigar. "I wouldn't have had it happen for all the money in the world. Julie, we must get that couch upholstered. It's so hard and skinny that it gave me the nightmare last night. I tell you, Tannenbaum, it's a weight off my mind that we can keep the prayer in Hebrew."

Mr. Preager remained master of the difficult situation he had created for himself owing to the arrival of more guests; and once the start had been made, the inflow continued steadily, till the capacious draw-

ing-room—Mrs. Diamond objected to having it called a parlor—felt it could do with a little bulging. But, despite the fact, Mrs. Diamond endeavored to keep a tolerably free space near the top of the table; in which endeavor she was loyally assisted by Mrs. Preager and Mrs. Tannenbaum, who were only glad of an opportunity to display their authority as second-in-command. The arrivals which, for the time being, attracted most attention were Mrs. Lipcott and Leuw. Mrs. Tannenbaum and Mrs. Preager had thought it worth quite a long consultation on the attitude to be adopted towards one who, though originally of equal standing, had for years occupied a menial and subordinate position; and they had decided on a bearing which was to be affable and courteous, yet containing a dash of patronage and condescension. But somehow the sight of her stalwart and self-possessed son robbed them of the courage of acting up to their intention, and the effusive greeting which Mrs. Lipcott met with from them made her face and heart glow with the comforting assurance of having come into her own again.

The festival proper was over an hour ago. Mrs. Diamond calculated that Mrs. Duveen would start immediately on its termination, which ought to bring her down to the house—by carriage of course—somewhere about seven. It was already half past; Mrs. Diamond began to grow fidgety. Desperately her hearing reached out for the sound of carriage wheels, till the constant strain brought on an hallucination that threatened to defeat its own ends. Everything seemed to merge into the rumble of carriage wheels—the buzz of conversation, the clink of the glasses,

Mrs. Tannenbaum's screech-laugh—the whole world seemed to find articulation in carriage wheels; the reserved space near the top of the table alone kept a considerate, intelligent silence. It was impossible for Mrs. Diamond to get to the windows without causing a widespread disarrangement, so that she was deprived even of the luxury of a reconnoitering peep; and though she flattered herself that she was keeping her pre-occupation carefully under cover, she once distinctly caught Mrs. Preager and Mrs. Tannenbaum whispering together and glancing at her in a manner which could only lend itself to one interpretation. It was this which induced her to abandon her project of stealing down to the street door and to despatch Mrs. Saffron instead as scout.

Five minutes later Mrs. Saffron thrust her head through the door and beckoned violently. Mrs. Diamond flew towards her.

"They're coming," panted Mrs. Saffron in a whisper.

"In the carriage?" panted back Mrs. Diamond.

"No, walking. Here they're coming up the staircase, all the five of 'em."

Mrs. Diamond felt that a great hole had been torn in her triumph. But she recovered herself quickly. The next best thing to having the Duveens with their carriage was to have the Duveens without it.

"Oh, you are late, Mrs. Duveen," she said, loud enough for everyone to hear. She would have given a week's salary could she have said, "Rose, dear," instead of "Mrs. Duveen." But she made up for it by rapturously kissing Dulcie and Effie. Effie, however, somewhat spoilt the effect by unceremoniously drawing her handkerchief across her mouth.

The entrance of the Duveen party created enough commotion to satisfy even Mrs. Diamond. Only a chosen few were vouchsafed an introduction to "my dear friend, Mrs. Duveen," and Mrs. Tannenbaum debated whether there was reasonable room for offense at Mrs. Preager's name being mentioned before her own.

Mrs. Duveen did not feel at all comfortable under the very pronounced scrutiny that assailed her from every side, and acknowledged her new acquaintances with a perfunctory politeness, which was at once characterized as stuck-uppishness. Uncle Bram's bluff, rollicking manner made a much more favorable impression.

Mrs. Diamond's eyes traveled about anxiously to collect facial evidence of opinion. Mrs. Tannenbaum sent her a wink, which was meant to convey to Mrs. Diamond congratulations on her taste in the selection of her friends.

"Not much for that lot," said Mrs. Tannenbaum simultaneously to Mrs. Preager. "Just look at her dress. I wouldn't be seen cleaning my doorstep in it."

"And not a shilling's worth of jewelry anywhere," commented Mrs. Preager in turn.

"They came down by 'bus, Julie," was Mrs. Tannenbaum's solemn apostrophe. "I don't believe in that carriage. I always had my suspicions about it. You know what Becky is."

Mrs. Preager nodded her assent, for one could not be discreet enough in a matter so highly treasonable. But Mrs. Diamond would not have been the least bit offended had she overheard them; it would rather

have added to her satisfaction, knowing how triumphantly she would be able to give the lie to their calumnies later on. For Mrs. Duveen had just whispered to her certain information which redeemed the great disappointment of the evening utterly. She at once went off to give Mrs. Saffron the necessary instructions.

Phil was pleurably surprised at finding himself in the company of Leuw and his mother. At Mrs. Duveen's special request room was made next to her for Mrs. Lipcott. The two women had met occasionally, for Mrs. Duveen had made a point of calling on Phil's mother whenever time allowed it, during her errands of charity to the East End. On none of these occasions, however, had she met Leuw, and therefore she did not recognize him now until Phil came up with him.

"You have been treating us very badly," she said smilingly. That was as far as she got, for here Mrs. Diamond returned and monopolized her.

"It's very hot, but it's awfully jolly, don't you think so?" said Effie to Dulcie, who had preferred keeping outside the enclosure. "I've never seen such a lot of queer people together in my life. I'll laugh outright if that woman keeps on wobbling her feather-crest."

"Don't make fun of them," reproved Dulcie.

"Why not? They won't mind, because they won't know."

"It isn't right, though. We are all Jews and Jewesses here, you and I and everyone of us."

"Well, that's exactly why I am inclined to see the joke of it. If there were any Christians here, do you know what I would do?"

"Well, what?"

"I should put on my solemnest face, and make them believe that no respectable woman ought to go to a party without feathers in her hair."

"And keep on wobbling them," added Dulcie.

"Just so," laughed Effie. "Still, on second consideration, some of us look quite nice. See that neat, quiet-faced woman next to Auntie?"

"I think that must be Phil's mother," said Dulcie. "I can't be sure, because I haven't seen her since the time we fetched Phil away; and I suspect she didn't look her ordinary self that day."

"I dare say she didn't," agreed Effie. "By the way, who is that Phil is talking to?"

"His brother," came Dulcie's rather abrupt reply. Then she turned suddenly, afraid lest Effie should ask her how she knew.

"Oh, that's Leuw, is it? I like him," was Effie's prompt criticism.

"Do you?" asked Dulcie indifferently.

"And I beg his pardon," continued Effie.

Dulcie looked astonished. "What for?" she asked. "You couldn't possibly ever have offended him."

"Yes, I did, without his knowing it. Don't you remember I said he would look like a cobbler's boy?"

"Don't you think he does?"

"Dulcie, haven't you got eyes? No cobbler's boy could disguise himself so well to look like a gentleman. If Phil doesn't bring him over soon, I'll go up and introduce myself—look, Dulcie, here they come."

But Dulcie did not look; her eyes sought a different direction; she hardly knew why, or if she did, she

would not admit it to herself. It had been a great surprise to her that she was able to recognize "the boy who shouted" after so many years, almost at first glance. She had done so, not from the likeness to Phil, which could be faintly traced, but because of the honest look in his eyes which had from the very first given her the strong desire to make friends with him; she would have known him by it had the interval been three times as long. No, he certainly did not look as if he had stayed away so obstinately for fear of disgracing Phil; his appearance suggested nothing obviously discreditable. So he had kept aloof out of sheer indifference. Dulcie remembered having prayed that it should rather be this latter than any other reason. And now that she knew her prayer had been fulfilled—well, it made her glance the other way as she saw him approach.

And the next moment she heard him saying to her: "You don't remember me, do you?"

"Oh, yes, I do," said Dulcie readily. She would not pay him the compliment of troubling to fence with her answer.

"It's a long time since we met," continued Leuw lamely.

"Is it?"

"So long that it almost seems as if we hadn't met at all."

"Really, I haven't thought about it," said Dulcie. But she had the grace to blush at her untruth.

"I never fancied that you had."

The words no doubt were meant to sound neutral, but Dulcie's quick ear detected a ring of provocation, and Leuw's mien bore out her suspicion of it. It made her feel strangely pleased and conciliatory.

"But I might have thought about it, if I had had an idea we were going to meet again," she said frankly.

Leuw's face cleared. "You see, accidents will happen," he jested.

"And it seems you were quite satisfied to leave it to accident," Dulcie was about to say when she was cut short by Phil, who came up and introduced Effie. Leuw looked at her with much interest. Effie was well-known to him from Phil's numerous references to her doings and misdoings; and as he scanned her laughing eyes and mischievous mouth, he wondered he had not heard more of the misdoings. His scrutiny, too, gave him an opportunity of judging whether laughing eyes and mischievous mouths were superior to eyes earnest and sober, with perhaps a dash of sadness in them, and lips that puckered a little primly; and he had no difficulty in deciding that the superiority lay with the latter.

Meantime, as might be expected, the mischievous mouth was having most of the say, speeding quip and sally and contributing much to the enjoyment of the hour. Leuw greatly surprised and delighted Phil by the ease wherewith he stood that severest test of a man's self-possession—the showing himself at home in the company of strange women, of whatever growth. It gave him some idea how hard Leuw must have butted against the world to have had his corners knocked off so completely. The fear that it might be otherwise had given Phil many a moment of apprehension. He had often anticipated the time when he and Leuw would meet on the same platform of life, and he writhed at the thought that he would put his

elder brother to the blush by his superiority of "form." That danger was happily done with. As to the petty social politenesses, Phil had himself played tutor to Leuw, and Leuw had acquired them with an aptitude only natural in a man whose brains had enabled him at nineteen to furnish a house on his own earnings.

"May I get you anything, sir?" said a voice at Phil's ear, startling him out of his reflections.

"What, is that you, Yel—I mean Joe?"

"Yes, sir," said Yellow Joe. "I'm here on the odd job, helpin' to wait, sir."

"Don't you know who I am?"

"I know who you used to be, sir," replied Yellow Joe.

"Then what on earth, man, are you 'sirring' me for? Tip us your hand, old pard," said Phil, purposely breaking into the language of old times.

Yellow Joe did so eagerly. "I didn't know but what you wouldn't be puttin' on 'gyver' to a poor bloke like me," he said wistfully.

"What, after we played buttons together, Joe?" exclaimed Phil, almost indignant.

"Say Yellow Joe, and then I'll know you ain't kiddin'."

Smilingly Phil complied. "I'm awfully sorry your father's paralyzed arm isn't getting better."

"How do you know?" asked Yellow Joe, astonished.

"Leuw told me. Do you think I've never enquired after you?"

"Wish he had told me."

"Why?"

"I'd have been glad to know you hadn't forgotten me. I thought of you many a time; wondered what was becomin' of you." He paused and, as it were, took stock of Phil. "No, Phil, I ain't jealous of you. You deserved your luck; you always was a good sort."

"Married yet—engaged?" asked Phil, to give the talk a lighter turn.

Yellow Joe looked scornful. "Catch me wastin' my time on that kind of tommy rot. Tell you, got my hands full to keep the show goin' at home, with eight of 'em, one smaller than the other and father incurable. But if you think I'm sniveling, you're jolly well mistaken, because I ain't."

"I didn't think you were—I wouldn't insult you like that," said Phil soberly. "If I did what you are doing, I'd simply reek of conceit."

"Keep up your penmanship and figures, Joe," quietly interjected Leuw, who had overheard the tail end of the conversation.

"I'm keepin' 'em up," said Yellow Joe quite fiercely, and then calming down, he turned appealingly to Phil. "He's driving me crazy with it. Every time he meets me it's 'Joe, keep up your penmanship and figures.' And when I ask him what for, he says, 'I'll tell you next time.' Leuw, when's next time?"

"Not this time," laughed Leuw.

Just then Yellow Joe caught the hostess' watchful look, and dived away without another word. Phil gazed after him thoughtfully. His talk with Yellow Joe had enabled him to realize a vague, impalpable sense of satisfaction which had tantalized him by its elusiveness; he had now fully grasped it, its essence,

its origin. For the first time to-night, for many years, he was rubbing shoulders with the associations of his youth. He had lived in a world so alien to them that he might well have felt afraid that the re-approachment would partake more of the nature of a collision; but it had gone off without a shock, without a single vibration of repugnance. Of course, he loved his people; but perhaps he only loved them as an abstract, elemental thing of which he formed a materialized particle, so that his love was sheer egoism. Here, however, he was dealing with them, not as a cold, far-off generality, but as warm, palpitating atoms of life, thrusting themselves bodily upon his physical and mental ken; and he knew it needed no undue strain on his part to bring himself to make apology for their foibles, to extenuate their weaknesses, to shed tears of joy at their most commonplace virtues. And, moreover, he remembered that he was putting his affections to their most crucial test. The people around him to-night were, mostly, if not all, the representatives of a smug parochial prosperity; they were not the lowly and destitute, whose faces were in themselves letters of credit, traced in lines of care, on the fund of fraternal sympathy. Oh! these lowly and destitute ones! His compassion for them swelled into a very paroxysm. If only he were already a man; if only he had already at least one foot in the stirrup of his career, how he would come among them, stepping, as it were, out of the darkness, which they thought could beget nothing but more misery, on his lips a loud-voiced evangel, in his right hand the flag of salvation. This was his dream, one of his dreams. He did not know—or it would have glad-

dened him unspeakably—that his brother Leuw had forestalled him in the conception of it years and years ago.

“Look at Dinah Lipcott’s second,” said Mrs. Preager, nudging Mrs. Tannenbaum. “I’m sure he’s got something the matter with him—see his mouth twitch just then?”

“I don’t care what’s the matter with him, I know what’s the matter with me,” replied Mrs. Tannenbaum wrathfully. “Did you ever see such arrangements? Half-past nine and not a smell of supper. I’ll faint in a minute.”

“Strikes me, after all the fuss it’ll be only sandwiches,” said Mrs. Preager gloomily.

“Then, what did she want to bother me with lending her my knives and forks?” snapped Mrs. Tannenbaum.

“To kid us into fancying something, I suppose.”

“Still, the breakfast-room’s locked,” went on Mrs. Tannenbaum: “I tried the handle before coming in here.”

Mrs. Tannenbaum’s optimism was brilliantly vindicated, for just then Mrs. Diamond, acting on a signal from Mrs. Saffron, which she in turn passed on to Mr. Diamond, arose and shrilled through the babel:

“Ladies, please take your gentlemen in to supper.”

This inversion of the formula must not be taken as internal evidence that Mrs. Diamond was a champion of woman’s rights. In reality, it was due to nothing save her rather flurried condition. But possibly her confusion was construed into an anxiety as to the seating capacity of the breakfast-room, which was known to be limited; this alone could account for the

fact that the transit thither could hardly be said to accord with the dignity of the occasion. In real truth it was a scramble, almost a scuffle. Mrs. Tannenbaum got her bead trimmings entangled on somebody's waistcoat buttons, and elbowed herself and Mr. Tannenbaum into place, deluging everybody near with showers of jet. The lady of the feathers could never find out exactly what had become of them; true, she fancied that she saw a bit of them floating in her left-hand neighbor's soup, but even that did not conclusively prove to her that they had become absorbed into the bill of fare.

The Duveens—unlike Mrs. Lipcott and Leuw, who were more prepared for it—at first watched the rush with the consternation due to a panic, and afterwards, when they divined the true nature of it, with an amusement which they tried in vain to conceal from Mrs. Diamond's agonized eye. Owing chiefly to Leuw's forethought, they had kept out of the stampede, and now Mrs. Diamond, having reduced the chaos beyond to a semblance of order, came back and with apologetic references to "those sort of people, you understand what I mean," entreated them to take seats "strictly reserved, mind you," at the supper table. Mrs. Duveen and the rest of them struggled hard to resist, but under Mrs. Diamond's indomitable importunateness, re-inforced by the thought of the coming speech, a mule might have succumbed without putting the prestige of its species under a cloud.

Despite the bad beginning, the banquet itself was pronounced a success, with Mrs. Tannenbaum heading the chorus of praise. No one took exception at having periodically to wait for somebody else's knife,

and the scarcity of crockery was hailed by several married couples as a lucky opportunity for demonstrating to the world the good understanding between them by eating from off the same plate.

Mr. and Mrs. Diamond did not eat from the same plate nor from separate plates; neither of them ate at all. Mr. Diamond felt the speech sticking in his throat, from which he augured uneasily that it was not located where it ought to be—in his head. Mrs. Diamond was busy rehearsing to herself, so as to be ready to prompt her husband, should emergency arise. It was apparently a spontaneously happy idea into which, however, he had been carefully drilled by Mrs. Diamond, that made Mr. Preager approach Uncle Bram—Mr. Alexander, as he ought to be more fittingly styled under the circumstances—to propose the toast of the host and hostess. Uncle Bram cheerfully complied, and in a few well-chosen words expressed the pleasure it gave him and his sister to be present on the enjoyable occasion. As an honorary officer of the Synagogue Union he congratulated Mr. Diamond on the public spirit he had shown in accepting an office which, although at some little expense, served to perpetuate the traditions of their race; and in conclusion he wished Mr. and Mrs. Diamond, as well as all the other members of their congregation, every success in this world and the next.

The applause that followed his remarks subsided to an expectant hush, but broke out again with renewed vigor as Mr. Diamond staggered to his feet. Mrs. Tannenbaum afterwards declared that she positively saw his beads of perspiration dripping on to the tablecloth, but Mrs. Preager maintained that they lost

themselves somewhere in the region of his collar. Just before beginning, Mr. Diamond was seen to give a jerk, but only those in the immediate neighborhood could conjecture that the true cause of it was a whispered: "Now, then, Diamond," from his wife.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," said Mr. Diamond. "It affords me and Mrs. Diamond very great pleasure to see you assembled round this hospitable table. We are always pleased to do what we can for our friends, in our humble way, that is, and we hope that none of you have anything to complain of in the way you have been treated here this evening. We don't like to boast, but I dare say you have already observed for yourselves that we are doing the thing in first-rate style, as, thank God, we can well afford to. Specially, we want to thank our very dear friends, Mrs. Duveen and Mr. Alexander, for honoring us with their presence, which, I feel sure, is a thing they would not do for everybody. Now, for what concerns myself, I have always tried my best to be a credit to the community, and, thank God for all mercies, I may say without blushing that my name stands better in the loan offices than many a man with three times my income; from which you can guess that I've had my fair share of helping a friend or two out of a tight hole; and talking of being kind-hearted and helpful reminds me of somebody else who's just made up of that sort of thing; and that's my wife, God bless her. That's all she thinks of from morning to night, including meals. I'd just like to know if there's another woman within an hour's walk from here that subscribes out of her own housekeeping money to three bread-meat-and-coal societies, besides being president

of the Inlying Charity of the Women of Bialostock and a member of the committee of the Free Dispensary, not to mention her making door-to-door collections any time she hears of a specially distressful case." The speech then went on to insist, at some length, on the disinterestedness and honesty of purpose which actuated Mrs. Diamond in her charity work, the details of which her retiring disposition and distaste for praise made her keep a strict secret even from Lady Simmondson, "whom, in a manner of speaking, she might also call her bosom friend after Mrs. Duveen." The remaining sentences discoursed of Mrs. Diamond in a strain which, even though pitched in a much lower key, would have made her appear to the uninitiated listener certainly one of the most remarkable women of her times.

To avoid misunderstanding, let it be clearly stated that this was the speech which Mr. Diamond *ought* to have delivered, but did not. No sooner had he got beyond the introductory "Ladies and Gentlemen," when he became aware that had his life depended on his remembering a single connected sentence of the carefully composed, carefully rehearsed address, he would die a most sudden death. He felt like a man who is walking the plank, and has just come to the end of it. And meantime Becky was inspiring him to eloquence by encouragingly treading on his corns. Mr. Diamond, however, saved the situation by a presence of mind which approached the miraculous. In a moment his hand was tugging frantically at collar and necktie, the whites of his eyes turned up, and presently, after a preliminary oscillation or two, he collapsed heavily into his chair.

"Water, water," shrieked Mrs. Diamond, thoroughly taken in by the ruse, and for once in a way genuinely alarmed about her husband.

Mr. Diamond took good care not to come round too hurriedly, and while Mrs. Diamond was chafing his temples with eau-de-cologne from Mrs. Duveen's scent-bottle, he listened complacently to the sympathetic remarks evoked by his indisposition, which everybody ascribed to an emotion at once natural and becoming. It was only when Uncle Bram urged that a doctor should be sent for that Mr. Diamond pretended to revive. As for a speech, who would expect such a thing from a man obviously returning from the verge of his grave? Mrs. Diamond, too, was not displeased. True, the speech was a pity, but Mrs. Duveen's attentions had been most flattering, and enquiries, whether personal or by letter, after Mr. Diamond's health, could no doubt be turned into a peg for closer relations.

On their return to the drawing-room, Mrs. Duveen, with Dulcie on her arm, chanced for an instant against Leuw.

"You know Phil is leaving for Cambridge the day after to-morrow," Mrs. Duveen said to him, "and it's only right we should give him a send-off—quite private, I mean. Will you come up to-morrow night? I asked your mother, and she said she would leave it to you."

Leuw did not reply immediately. Involuntarily, his glance fell on Dulcie's face; her eyes were already resting on his, silently but unmistakably seconding the invitation.

"Thank you, Mrs. Duveen—I shall be very glad to

come," he said; but somebody else seemed to be replying instead of him.

Uncle Bram was looking solicitously at his watch. "I hope he'll find his way here," he said to Mrs. Duveen.

Mrs. Diamond overheard the remark, and at once hurried off to renew her instructions to Mrs. Saffron. At the same time she started a series of vigorous "ahems," as though to get rid of any possible obstruction in her larynx.

The substantial supper had done its work, and everybody was in excellent humor. Messrs. Preager and Tannenbaum cast coveting glances at the card-table, which stood ignominiously thrust away into a corner, but out of deference to the distinguished guests they gloved their itching fingers with patience.

"I don't suppose they'll stay much longer," they consoled each other.

But it was close on midnight before Mrs. Diamond, who had kept up incessant watch, saw Mrs. Saffron poke her head through the door and nod three times significantly. Mrs. Diamond gave another and final "ahem" that might have passed as an "attention" on any parade ground, ere she came out with:

"Mrs. Duveen, your carriage is waiting for you downstairs."

The effect was electric. In the rush to the windows half a dozen chairs were overturned, and Mrs. Tannenbaum nearly pushed out one of the panes with her nose in her eagerness to get a better view. Yes, there it was right enough. The carriage and pair with the liveried coachman on the box seat.

The commotion did more than the lateness of the

hour in making the Duveen party whittle its farewells down to the narrowest margin of politeness. Mrs. Diamond's eyes, as she stood waiting at the door to pilot them down, nearly set the room on fire with their blaze of triumph.

"To-morrow night, then," said Mrs. Duveen, pressing Leuw's hand. And again Dulcie looked corroboration.

"You will come again soon, won't you?" Mrs. Diamond was heard to shriek from the street. "And remember me kindly to your cousin, Lady Simmondson."

The carriage rolled off, and Mrs. Diamond remained watching it to the bend of the street. As she made her way up the staircase, the steps of which had become metamorphosed into india-rubber, the rapid beat of her heart was the thump of the hammer nailing together the bridge which would eventually span the gulf between herself and the aristocracy of England.

Mrs. Tannenbaum and Mrs. Preager, meantime, while awaiting her return upstairs, were relieving an impotent jealousy by an exchange of comments, heavily saturated with a flavor of sour grapes.

"Yes, he's very nice—is Leuw," summed up Effie, blowing out the night-light, "but he doesn't talk—I couldn't get a word out of him."

"Couldn't you?" yawned Dulcie, nestling more cosily into her pillow. No doubt it was wrong—awfully wrong. But for all that she was very glad that Effie had not been able to get a word out of Leuw. She herself had got several, quite a dozen or more.

CHAPTER XIX

THE next day distinguished itself for Leuw by a certain "dragginess" that was peculiarly its own. Everything had an element of length. The way up to the stock-room was twice as long as usual, the change took longer in counting out, people spoke with irritating slowness. He asked old Christopher if he noticed it as well.

"Can't say I do," replied Christopher, from the birthday arm-chair, where he had now taken to spending most of his time; "but when you've been out late on the spree, it's no wonder things feel a bit leaden next morning."

"I dare say you are right," said Leuw. As a matter of fact, he had neither exerted himself very violently to extract enjoyment from the Diamond festivity, nor had he left late—scarcely two minutes after the Duveens; but he accepted Christopher's explanation, thinking it as good as any he cared to formulate for himself.

"Suppose you let me help you a bit; perhaps things'll go quicker then," suggested Christopher.

"I'll do nothing of the sort," was Leuw's severe reply; "you work as hard as you can at taking it easy."

"You never will let me put a hand to anything now," grumbled old Christopher, but only very softly.

"You've got to consider yourself invalided. You know yourself invalids aren't permitted at the front. So hurry up and get strong again."

"I'm hurryin' as fast as I can, Leuw, boy; but just as I've made an inch of headway that cough o' mine gives a tug and pulls me back again."

"That's exactly why you should keep quiet, and pretend it's having all its own way; and one fine day, thinking it's finished you up altogether, it'll march itself off, and then you and I will have the laugh of it. See?"

Christopher nodded feebly. He did everything feebly now. He was not even strong enough to notice the child's language in which Leuw had thought fit to converse with him for the last week or two. It had given Leuw a tremendous shock the first time Christopher had answered some simple question of his by a look of blank incomprehension. A feeling of unutterable sadness had stolen over him at the knowledge that the firm of Donaldson & Lipcott now counted one sleeping partner, the nature and degree of whose sleeping—Leuw recoiled from the thought—might at any moment turn out to be something else than what the business idiom implied. At first, too, Leuw had felt a little frightened at the prospect of sole responsibility devolving on him, at having to be the umpire of his own initiative, unqualified by reference to Christopher's sage experience. For Christopher's days of wisdom were irrevocably over. But then Leuw took heart again as he remembered that with each step forward the business had made, so in proportion had his capacities for coping with it increased; and the danger he apprehended was rather that they would grow out of proportion and chafe against the narrowness of their scope. The chief discomfort of it was the physical strain to which he was put; what, how-

ever, made him struggle on alone was the consideration that Christopher would look on the suggestion of keeping a shop-boy or clerk, not as a necessity for the prosperity of the concern, but as an additional sign of his own uselessness. And Leuw was determined to work his arms and legs out of joint sooner than give that kindly, old, pain-riven heart a final pang. And that being so, he once more fell to wondering why, with two men's work on his hands, the day should count twice the ordinary number of minutes to the hour.

He heaved a deep sigh of relief when he saw the clock pointing to seven. Quietly he put up the shutters without giving Christopher any reason for closing an hour earlier. For one thing, it was unnecessary, for Christopher now never took it into his head to ask what the time was. It was quite obvious that he had done with such a thing as time and its difficult and artificial subdivisions.

When Leuw came home, he found his mother already in her state dress, the one she had worn last evening at the Diamond's.

"Won't we be late? It's such a long way, you know," she said anxiously.

"We shall be early enough," replied Leuw, a little pettishly perhaps. But despite his assurance he made such a hurried supper that the greater part of it remained behind on his plate. He went up to his own room at a leisurely pace, but once he had shut the door, he broke into a frantic haste, which resulted in half the desired speed. Of course, the frisky collar-stud had to have its little game of hide-and-seek, and when it was finally captured, Leuw thought unkind

things of the laundry people for starching the button-holes into such obstinacy. And then, when he came down, he found to his surprise that instead of an hour, as he had imagined, the whole proceedings had not taken him twenty minutes.

"Leuw, I feel a trifle nervous—do you?" laughed Mrs. Lipcott, just as they got out into the open.

"Nonsense, mother," replied Leuw. Then he stopped abruptly. "I must run in again for a minute. I've forgotten something; my—handkerchief."

He left his mother waiting outside, and hurried back to his room. In the first place he exchanged the handkerchief he had put in his pocket before for another one, by which he compromised with his conscience for having put his mother off with a pretext. Then he unlocked the little drawer, in which he kept his bank-book, and extracted from it an envelope. This last contained, as he assured himself by a cursory inspection, a scrap of manuscript, the writing of which showed the faintness of age. It was indeed the first communication he had ever received by post; what prompted him to take it with him now when he was going to see the writer of it, was to himself a mystery.

"I wonder which turning it is," said Leuw, as they came out of the station.

"The third on the right," answered Mrs. Lipcott, very pat.

"Is it? How do you know?"

"I think I remember Phil saying so," replied his mother, though with a curious embarrassment, which did not escape Leuw.

"You're right about the turning; now, how about finding the number?" said Leuw.

His difficulty was due to the fact that the houses stood far back fringed in front by a long stretch of garden.

"It's the fifth house on the other side," said Mrs. Lipcott.

"Did Phil tell you?"

"No—yes," vacillated Mrs. Lipcott.

"You've been here before, mother," said Leuw, turning on her quickly.

"Yes, Leuw," admitted Mrs. Lipcott, recovering herself. "I've been here before, four times I believe. But I never went inside."

"Well, then, what made you come here at all?"

"Leuw, can't you understand?"

Leuw thought a moment or two, and then nodded assent silently.

"I couldn't help it," said Mrs. Lipcott deprecatingly. "Sometimes the thought of him grew too strong for me, and then I came up here—after it was dark—and stood outside just to feel him near me even if"

"Where's the need of explaining, mother?" interrupted Leuw. "I told you I understood."

"Thank you, Leuw," said Mrs. Lipcott.

They found Mrs. Duveen, Dulcie, and Phil seated on the window terrace—the evening was very fine—waiting for them. A vote between the sitting-room and a little more of the terrace was easily carried in favor of the latter.

"If you're not too tired, we might take a stroll through the grounds, Leuw," said Phil presently. "Dulcie, you will come too, eh?"

Dulcie's ready acceptance of the suggestion hardly

left Leuw the choice of a refusal, even had he felt inclined to refuse, which he did not. He could not quite make it out—the phenomenon disconcerted him somewhat: the moment Dulcie had touched his hand in welcome, the impatience which had haunted him all day had lifted as though by magic. Perhaps now he was going to find out what it all meant.

Without a word Mrs. Duveen watched the trio down the gate-walk; then she moved her chair close to Mrs. Lipcott's.

"I am very glad we have an opportunity for five minutes' quiet talk," she said, sinking her voice rather unnecessarily, because the others were far out of ear-shot. "I had hardly hoped we should get it so easily, and I was already casting about for a stratagem."

"What, is it anything so very special you have to say?" smiled Mrs. Lipcott.

"Yes, very special," said Mrs. Duveen, evidently much in earnest. "It is nothing less than to ask your forgiveness."

"My forgiveness?"

"I did you a great wrong in taking your son away from you; still that is so long ago that I may fairly claim that time has made good my trespass. The wrong I want you to forgive I committed only a few days back."

"Why, surely—you really don't mean—I don't understand you," faltered Mrs. Lipcott helplessly.

"You will soon," said Mrs. Duveen, her hand closing very tightly over that of her listener. "Mrs. Lipcott, the truth is that a few days ago I robbed you of your son a second time. No, listen. The night Phil returned from Cambridge he told me he had made

up his mind to go back to you. He said—not in so many words—that he had eaten the bread of charity long enough, that his relationship to me was undermining his sense of manliness. It may have been that, but no doubt it was a good deal more. It was blood calling to blood; the old ties were asserting themselves again—he wanted his mother—his real mother, not the imitation one I have been to him. No, please, let me talk. What did I do? I was false to the spirit of true womanhood, and combated his natural, honorable feelings by every wile and guile I could think of; and I succeeded in chaining him down again. For the time being I felt myself justified in using any measures, no matter to whom I might be dealing hurt and heart-ache. I was jealous, insensately jealous. But, thank God, I have come back to my right mind; I want to get even with my conscience—I want to get even with you, my dear friend.”

“I did not know he was coming back—I never expected it,” murmured Mrs. Lipcott half to herself.

“That only makes my offense greater,” said Mrs. Duveen eagerly. “I was taking an unfair advantage. If you had known that his intention was such, you would have done your best to strengthen it, and made it hold out against all the trickery I mustered up. And now I want you to show me your forgiveness—by taking him back. I dare not tell him of the conclusion I have come to; it would puzzle him, or make him think I was playing fast and loose with him, and he will hate me. You can easily set right my blunder. Just say to him; ‘Phil, come,’ and he will come.”

Mrs. Lipcott felt the slight figure next to her quiver from head to foot.

"But you want to keep him yourself," she said.

"No, I don't want to keep him," cried Mrs. Duveen; "I want to be able to look you and everybody else in the face."

Mrs. Lipcott was silent. Gradually, as though by the growing force of contact, she felt a shiver tingle down her back. But no, it was not that; she had ample cause of her own for trembling. She had been set face to face with an unexpected temptation, and she did not know how she would come through it. It was a terrible thing to have her heart's desire placed within easy reach of her and to feel that before she might snatch at it, she must hustle her conscience to one side. To have Phil back again? Her head whirled. To have him back for good and all, and to be done with the agony of empty longing, which had hounded her forth, on the cold winter nights, haply to get a glimpse of him, and assure herself that she really did have a son Phil, whom she had handed over, of her own free will, to another woman. . . . And here was this other woman pretending that she was eager to restore him, and pretending very badly, for with every syllable of hers she had cried out in protest against being taken at her word. The question that put itself to Mrs. Lipcott was, which of the two was more fit for making sacrifice, which of the two was more cunning in the art of resignation. And undoubtedly the answer to that question was—herself. Well, then, in God's name . . .

"No, Mrs. Duveen," she said tremulously, "you blame yourself too much. You were right in doing your best to keep him with you. You have earned him."

"Don't try to justify me in spite of myself, Mrs. Lipcott. The only favor you can do me is to accept my apology and to tell Phil that we have talked the matter over, and we have come to see that . . ."

"But we have not talked the matter over," said Mrs. Lipcott.

"Well, then, I must go through my confession again," replied Mrs. Duveen, a little wearily.

"No, what I mean is that you have put your side of the case. I have said nothing yet."

"But there is no need for it, my dear. What is the use of putting your side? I admit everything beforehand."

"In that case, Mrs. Duveen, Phil stays with you."

"Stays with me? Well, then, in heaven's name, what are you going to say?"

Mrs. Lipcott set her teeth firmly before replying—somehow it steadied her voice. "Only that I, too, have a conscience, and that my conscience tells me that your claims to him are quite as great as mine. And that's why it is better things should keep as they are. After all, it was surely nothing but a boy's fancy."

"Do you really think it was nothing else?" asked Mrs. Duveen wistfully.

"I am certain of it," said Mrs. Lipcott, with a silent thanksgiving that she was convinced of the contrary.

"Even if it was," mused Mrs. Duveen, "I can't understand a mother being so strong."

"All Jewish mothers are strong," said Mrs. Lipcott; "you, too, although you may not know it yourself. I think we all learnt the lesson from Hannah—you know whom I mean, the one who saw all her

seven sons mangled to death, one after another, and helped them to die painlessly, by smiling on them all the time. I've read her story over and over again; but, thank God, mine is a very different one to hers."

"In the sadness of it only; in the heroism you rank equal," said Mrs. Duveen very softly.

Whether Mrs. Lipcott did not quite catch the remark, or whether she desired to clinch the matter so as to cut off all retreat for herself, at any rate her voice was quite matter-of-fact as she said:

"So that is settled?"

"No, not quite settled," replied Mrs. Duveen, chokingly; "something else remains to be done."

She took Mrs. Lipcott's hands in her own, and pressed them convulsively as she peered hard through the gloom into the dim outlines of the face before her. Then with a gasp that was more a sob, she whispered:

"Dinah!"

Mrs. Lipcott understood at once: "Rose," she whispered back.

With that the two were in each other's arms, sealing their compact of sisterhood in the time-honored fashion which women have.

From along the gate-walk had come at intervals the sound of merry laughter—Dulcie's fresh and silvery, Phil's full and sonorous, both punctuated occasionally by a kind of good-humored grunt, which could only belong to Leuw. They were indulging in reminiscences of last night, and Mrs. Diamond would no doubt have been considerably chagrined, had she known that the humorous side was uppermost.

"Pity Effie isn't down with us," said Phil tentatively. "Won't you go and call her, Dulcie?"

"If I do, I'll have to do it through the key-hole, because the door's locked. You know she won't be interrupted when she's practicing."

"Well, then, let's go into the garden," suggested Phil as an alternative.

"But it's so dark there—we won't be able to see anything," objected Dulcie.

"More fun that—having to feel our way," laughed Phil.

"And suppose I bang my head against the arbor?" said Dulcie merrily.

"So much the worse for the arbor," teased Phil.

A "wretch!" and a slap from Dulcie were the punishment of the offender.

"This way," said Phil, "and let's keep close together. I do hope we won't get mixed up in this Egypt."

"I'm going to hold tight to you, Phil," said Dulcie.

"We're mixed up already," said Leuw: "you've got hold of my arm instead of Phil's."

"Oh!" said Dulcie, letting go hastily.

"Don't you think mine will do instead, though?" asked Leuw in a tone which he hoped sounded facetious.

Dulcie was about to be agitated by qualms of propriety, but she quickly repented. Why, Phil's brother . . .

"But you must promise not to lose me," she said.

Leuw, however, forgot to promise, because he was much too busy enjoying the contact of her arm. He was altogether in a forgetful mood to-night. The darkness, or whatever else it was, seemed to have washed from his mind all the things of which he as a

rule was most painfully conscious—his anxiety about Christopher, the worries of the business, the fatigue of the day's toiling. But chiefly he had forgotten himself. The Leuw he used to know, whose soul was nothing but an impatient straining toward the goal his resolution had set up for him immovably, was hardly recognizable in this other Leuw who ambled airily, irresponsibly, through a mystic fairy-land, not knowing where the path led to, not caring whether it led to anywhere. But he more than suspected who the guide was that led him such devious ways; indeed it was the only certainty he possessed at present. To him Phil's jesting admonition about not getting "mixed up" was a warning to be taken seriously. So he knew that he would untangle himself sooner or later; but—oh, how he wished it might be later!

Inch by inch almost they crept forward along one of the side walks, keeping close to the wall.

"Oh! Phil," cried Dulcie suddenly, "I think I've trodden something dead—a mimosa, I believe."

"Have you? Never mind; we shan't prosecute you for murder," said Phil drily.

Dulcie expressed her indignation at his callousness by addressing Leuw: "If you had sniggered just then, I wouldn't have let you hold my arm another second."

Leuw said nothing, but felt very glad for having "just then" communed with himself so earnestly as not to have overheard Phil's attempt at wit.

A yard or two further on there was another exclamation from Dulcie.

"What's the matter now?" asked Phil unsympathetically.

"I've got my hair caught in a creeper—wait a bit; there, I am loose again."

"That's right; pretend to be Absalom," chuckled Phil. "I believe he was left hanging to his tree for killing mimosas—what do you say, Leuw?"

"I'm going back," cried Dulcie, ruffled as to her temper as well as her hair.

"No, you won't," said Phil sternly; "we're going to make the round of this garden—if we all hang for it."

After a little demur, which was obviously artificial, Dulcie consented to proceed.

"I say, Leuw, we'd have given something for this place in the old days, eh? What sort for playing Red Indians?" asked Phil.

"Yes, it seems grand for prowling," replied Leuw.

"Oh! yes, a fine lot of prowling you'd have done here," said Dulcie scornfully. "If old Rackham—that's our gardener—had caught you at it—he'd have scalped you with his pruning knife."

Phil had stopped; more by the sound of his movements than by sight, for the night though calm and clear was very dark, they perceived he was reconnoitering.

"What are you going to do?" asked Dulcie.

"Find out where we are. Do you know?"

"We've passed the arbor . . ."

"Without knocking it over luckily," interjected Phil.

"And ought to be somewhere near the shrubbery."

"I happen to think otherwise, Dulcie. I've got a horrible suspicion we've got into the chrysanthemums."



"I'M GOING TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH NOW," SAID DULCIE
RESOLUTELY.

"There, what did I say? I told you not to go off the path. Mother'll be awfully angry if we do any damage to them."

"I must admit the chrysanthemums are rather a weak spot with her," said Phil soberly.

"What's to be done?" asked Leuw.

"Perhaps, if we wait a bit, the moon will come out," hazarded Dulcie.

"Nonsense," said Phil, "there won't be any moon to-night. You keep here while I trail back cautiously and fetch a lantern."

The other two listened to the sound of his retreating footsteps as far as their ears could follow them.

"This is a tremendously big garden, you know," said Dulcie at last; "and the dark makes it look twice as big."

"Don't you feel frightened?" asked Leuw.

"What should I be frightened about?" answered Dulcie astonished.

"Oh! nothing; only it's so dark, you see," faltered Leuw.

"I know what you mean," said Dulcie after a pause. "You mean stopping here with you."

"And considering I'm little more than a stranger," added Leuw.

"Not so much as you think," came from Dulcie, almost involuntarily.

"Not so much as I think?" echoed Leuw.

"I'm going to tell you the truth now," said Dulcie resolutely; "it's easier in the dark. If it was always dark, I think people wouldn't tell each other lies. Do you remember I pretended last night I didn't know how long it was since we met last?"

"I didn't know you were only pretending," said Leuw, his heart in his mouth.

"I did. I knew exactly how long it was; and—I was very angry that it was so long. Did Phil never give you any messages?"

"He gave me several; only I thought he made them up himself."

"No, they came from me right enough. That shows I thought about you sometimes, doesn't it?"

Leuw nodded, forgetting that the gesture was an absurdity under the circumstances.

"Doesn't it?" insisted Dulcie.

"Yes."

"Oh, I'm going to tell you everything," went on Dulcie, recklessly; "I want to make up for playing the fraud last night. Sometimes, well, more than sometimes, I wondered what was going to become of you. Once or twice I had an idea you might turn out bad—you can never tell with boys, you know; but that was only once or twice. Mostly I felt very hopeful about you. Well, so when I saw you yesterday, I felt at once that you had turned out as I had always pictured to myself you would. That's what I mean by saying you aren't such a stranger to me. Why, I feel as if I had seen you and talked to you every day all these years."

The logic of Dulcie's explanation was perfectly obvious to Leuw's understanding, and from his understanding it passed on to his heart, which seemed to be its real destination, judging from the way it made itself at home there.

"I'm so glad you hoped the best for me," he said humbly, gratefully.

"Are you? Why?"

"Because your hoping perhaps helped me a little towards it."

"Yes, I do think sometimes hoping is nearly as good as praying," mused Dulcie.

"But I'm not going to leave all the truth-telling to you," went on Leuw.

"What, have you been pretending as well?"

"In a sort of way. I knew those messages came from you."

"And that's why you took no notice of them?"

"I refused to come because I wasn't fit to come. I was clumsy and awkward. I didn't know how to wear my clothes properly, I spoke badly, I wasn't your equal. And I was terribly afraid you would find it out, and get disappointed with me, and give me the go-by altogether. I dare say you would have treated me very politely and not have laughed till my back was turned, and perhaps after a while you might have—have tolerated me, but I don't care for the idea of being tolerated. Oh! yes, I've wanted to come ever so much; but the risk was too great."

"You mean to say it wasn't mother you minded, or Uncle Bram, only me?"

"Only you."

"What a pity," said Dulcie regretfully.

"What is?"

"That you didn't explain it all to me long ago. If you had, I could easily have taken care not to get disappointed with you, and have made proper allowances—for—for things. Look what a terrible lot of friendship we have wasted all these years. It's sinful."

"Couldn't we make up for it now, by being friends all the harder?" suggested Leuw.

"Will you do your share of it, though?"

Leuw was silent, casting about for some emphatic rejoinder to assert his willingness. Unconsciously almost his hand slipped into his pocket where reposed the scrap of paper she had sent him long ago, and which he had treasured so assiduously. He had half pulled it out, intending to explain to her what part it might play as evidence, when a streak of light flashed towards them, and Phil sang out:

"Ship ahoy there!"

"Say you will," urged Dulcie, not understanding Leuw's silence.

"Yes, I will," said Leuw quickly, thrusting the envelope back into his pocket. The opportunity had passed. Perhaps there might be another later on in the evening; even if there was not, he had no cause to grumble.

"Now, then, you thieves—no larks. Where are you?" sang out Phil's voice again.

"Here, where you left us," answered Dulcie.

Together with the light streak came a burst of laughter which showed Phil to be accompanied by Effie.

"Ten to one she's laughing at us; I suppose Phil's been telling her of our plight," said Leuw good-humoredly.

"We can afford to let her laugh, eh?" said Dulcie, and Leuw replied with a heartfelt "Yes."

"Cheer up, you wretched castaways—help is coming," jeered Effie; and presently the relief party was upon them.

"Good gracious! don't we all look handsome," continued Effie, referring to the fact that the lantern—

Phil's bicycle lamp—cast a thin trail of light on the ground while leaving their faces in total darkness.

"Jingo!—saved by an inch," said Phil, examining their relative position to the chrysanthemums. "Now for the retreat. Follow me closely all of you. Ahem! I feel like Xenophon and his Ten Thousand."

"Phil, how can you talk shop under these distressing circumstances?" said Effie. "Who, by the way, was this Mr. Xylophon?"

Phil's account of the famous Anabasis made the return journey seem unnecessarily short—unnecessarily for Leuw at least. But he would not give way to the vague dissatisfaction at having soon to share with the world something which in a few brief moments he had come to regard as his own. The folly of it was obvious. And besides he noted that, as soon as they got into the radius of the hall-lamp, Dulcie's first glance was at him, and he was strangely comforted.

Mrs. Duveen and Mrs. Lipcott were just going within. The electroliers inside were sending out a great flood of light through the three ground-floor windows. Leuw took in with astonishment, a kind of dismay almost, the breadth and bulk of the house, which the enveloping gloom had previously shown up as a shadowy outline. Compared to it, his own dwelling off the Mile End Road was a mere child's toy. The feeling that came over him had in it nothing of envy. His dismay was changing to downright alarm. It made him catch his breath like one who was about to plunge into an unseen danger, and has been cautioned not a heart-beat too soon. The huge house lowered down upon him warningly. It put to flight

certain imaginings of his, half-formed and inchoate, and yet leaving a void, such as he would only expect from the effacing of his dearest and most familiar thought. And the worst of it was that he could not make up his mind whether his prevailing mood should be that of sadness or of anger.

"Late Victorian, with a dash of Gothic; I hope you like the style," said Phil at his elbow.

Leuw gave a start, but, recovering himself immediately, forced a laugh. Then, at Phil's suggestion, he followed him up into the hall and thence into the sitting-room with its broad glare of light. But though the brightness did not re-assure Leuw, it at any rate helped him to adjust his emotions. He knew now that the proper feeling under the circumstances was not sadness, but anger—anger against himself for an improvident fool who was coining counterfeit hopes and thinking therewith to bribe off a sure and immutable disappointment.

However, having come to the conclusion that he was a prodigal fool, Leuw, from notions of self-respect, refused to add to his folly and prodigality by wasting the pleasure of the moment. For, indeed, they made a merry company, and Uncle Bram's arrival shortly afterwards did certainly not detract from the animation of the proceedings.

"I'm glad to have this chance of improving our acquaintance," said Uncle Bram on shaking hands with Leuw. "I've heard such a lot about you."

And Mr. Alexander, being despite his bodily bulk a man of prompt action, lost no time in taking stock of Leuw. But he was exceedingly astonished at the keen grasp of affairs Leuw displayed in his

remarks; his knowledge of the questions of the day; his insight into matters commercial and economic.

"How did you get to know all these things?" Mr. Alexander could not forbear asking at last.

"Oh, I keep my eyes and ears open—I mean I read the papers and attend a good many lectures," replied Leuw, with a pleased smile at the implied compliment. He was all the more glad of the good impression he was producing upon Mr. Alexander, because he knew he was doing so almost in spite of himself; he by no means felt at his best. It cost him more than one great effort to prevent his mind and his eyes from wandering to where Dulcie, Phil, and Effie were exercising their joint ingenuity over a new toy puzzle which Uncle Bram had brought with him from the City. Leuw could have solved it in a twinkling; in fact, he had himself stocked the toy heavily. But he also knew that his anxiety to be with them did not arise entirely from a desire to show off his superiority in the matter.

At last, however, Mr. Alexander thought himself in duty bound to transfer his attention to Mrs. Lipcott, and Leuw obtained his release. After that, things went so rapidly that when Leuw shot an apprehensive glance at the mantle-piece clock he had an agreeable thrill of surprise at finding it only half-past ten. As to doubting the *bona fides* of so solid and venerable a concern, Leuw felt it would be nothing short of a positive insult, and so he refrained considerably from comparing it with his own time-piece. They need not leave for an hour.

But an hour is an hour, even when it seems ten minutes, and the London Railway Companies are run

in accordance with chronometric and not emotional regulations. Punctually at half-past eleven Leuw signaled to his mother.

"It's no use, Leuw, there are no more trains to-night," said Phil, smiling at Mrs. Duveen.

Leuw looked blank.

"There's a train at ten to twelve; I enquired," he said.

"So there is, but that went three-quarters of an hour ago; that clock's an hour slow; in fact, I moved it back myself," laughed Phil, delighted at the success of his ruse.

"You see," explained Mrs. Duveen, apologetically, "Phil was so bent on making a long night of it, as he called it, and I had to promise him I wouldn't interfere with his wish."

"I, too, was sworn to silence, or else I should have let my Waterbury speak," joined in Uncle Bram.

"What's to be done, Leuw?" asked Mrs. Lipcott.

"We'll have a cab, mother," said Leuw cheerfully.

"No, you won't, you'll stay here over night, and see me to the station in the morning—that was the idea of the conspiracy," said Phil.

"Mother can stay; I must be at the shop at nine," said Leuw firmly.

And so the arrangement stood. Mrs. Duveen allowed another half hour's grace, and then, with special reference to the two girls and the support of Mrs. Lipcott, she moved that the female contingent should adjourn to rest.

"Call this a late night? A fraud I call it," cried Effie indignantly, while Dulcie looked dumb entreaty.

But Mrs. Duveen's ruling prevailed, as it always did in matters of household routine. Leuw nodded in

polite compliance to Mrs. Duveen, who said something about now that he had broken the ice; he understood her to say that she wished him to come very often, but the actual words he only caught vaguely. That was because there rang in his ears and in his heart the echo of Dulcie's "good-night," to which she had added half timorously the word "Leuw." It came to him as a revelation how wonderfully soft and musical his name could be made to sound.

"Now that you will have to cab it anyhow, you may as well stay on a bit," said Phil.

"Yes, do," urged Uncle Bram; and Leuw readily consented. He had an idea that for the present he was not fit company for himself.

The talk at first was somewhat desultory, drifting lightly here and there, until, half at Uncle Bram's suggestion, Leuw brought it to anchor with an account of his career to date. Uncle Bram followed him with unmistakable interest, as did Phil, to whom Leuw's doings were always instinct with the zest of romance. No wonder, for to the student, to whom books are the world, it is the realities of life that take the shape of fairy tales. And Phil's pride in his adventurous brother waxed boundlessly, although the latter's unusual communicativeness surprised him not a little. Leuw could have explained it by a desire to stand well in the eyes of Dulcie's uncle, an explanation which would have sounded perfectly natural; but Leuw himself might have felt considerably at a loss, had he been asked to trace that desire back to its first beginnings.

Uncle Bram seemed to have an inkling that he was being treated exceptionally, as his next words showed.

"Thank you, Mr. Lipcott, for having made me your confidant. I feel honored and delighted. I won't say that my belief in my brothers-in-faith has ever been materially shaken, but it is just as well that it should occasionally get a spoonful of tonic, and you have been as good as a whole bottle. You see, we oldsters have a long way to look back, and only a little way to look forward—no further than to the rising generation. We haven't half as much time as we should like in which to do our duty to the future of our race; and that is why we are so pleased each time we get an assurance that at least our immediate successors will safeguard our traditions. Only the sceptic or the faint-heart will ask for more than that. As long as we are sure of you, we may, in the natural order of things, be sure of those who will in their turn take your places. And so link will follow link, until our destiny, or God's purpose in us, will have been accomplished."

Uncle Bram's voice had sunk reverently; his last words might have been the cadence of a prayer.

"I understand you, Mr. Alexander," said Leuw, regarding him steadily.

"You may wonder at the importance I attach to you," continued Mr. Alexander more briskly. "I have good reason for it. I am not often mistaken in my estimates, and I consider you have in you the makings of a worker, a worker of the most valuable sort, because you have *lived* what we others have but observed. We should be to you what the *dilettante* is to the professional. But don't hurry; grow ripe at your leisure; you have still your own field to plough. In the meantime, do you know what I should like to

do with you? I should like to bind you down by an affidavit, a moral one, of course, that when you hear the call, within you or without, you will answer it and not give precedence to other interests. It is perhaps an impertinence of me. I shan't be offended at your saying so."

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Alexander, I don't want to be bound down to it," answered Leuw.

Mr. Alexander smiled. "I can guess the sense in which you want me to take that. I am nothing but an old bungler for wishing to rob you of the credit of the initiative. Forgive and forget my mistake."

Shortly afterwards the conference broke up. Uncle Bram retired to the bedroom which was ever at his disposal. Leuw and Phil stood at the street door, clasping each other's hand firmly. For a minute neither spoke.

"I'm not going to say good-by, Leuw," remarked Phil at last; "it's all right as a sentiment, but as a word it sounds too formidable."

Leuw nodded. "You mean we aren't really parting from one another."

"No, and never shall," said Phil; "you will be going your way and I mine, but I shall always feel as if I should only have to stretch out my arm in order to tap you on the shoulder."

"And you may be sure that I shall stop and turn, whatever may be my errand," replied Leuw.

"I'm glad it's you who are leaving the house, not I," smiled Phil.

"What do you mean?" queried Leuw, not catching his drift.

"Don't you remember it's the privilege of the one

who stops behind to call after the outgoing one: 'The Lord bless and preserve you?' " replied Phil, repeating the old formula in its Hebrew setting.

" You've certainly got an unfair advantage, but I'll be even with you one of these days," smiled Leuw. And with that he went.

A few yards down the road he was hailed from a passing hansom with the customary " Cab, sir? " Leuw answered with a ringing " No, thanks," and hurried on. The idea of riding when he had so much to walk out of himself! He felt much more inclined to " take two cabs and run between," which he and his mates used to advise each other in the old days was a healthy way of getting home from anywhere.

The sky had preserved the same hue of solid inkiness which had necessitated the halt at the chrysanthemums. Leuw was halting there once more; he was again listening to Dulcie's offer of friendship. Now he could puzzle it out at his convenience. He knew what friendship meant; Christopher had taught him that. But the sober, reasoning attachment that drew him to the old man contained none of the responsiveness wherewith he strained towards this girl-woman. That was instinct with an involuntary yearning for affinity which he could not explain by any rule or rote of argument, which robbed him of all the self-knowledge to which he had so laboriously attained. What was going to be its development? This was what he must make up his mind on—and quickly. He could not say that he had nothing to guide him. There was the warning that had been borne in upon him at sight of the great house—the warning, corroborated by his wondering survey of the grandly ap-

pointed chamber, which had awed him the whole evening with its air of quiet, unconscious magnificence. The couch whereon he had sat had forced upon him comparison with the hard-ribbed, horse-hair sofa in his own home, the sofa which was intended for the crowning glory of the newly acquired furniture, and which now was the first support that gave way in the fabric of his pride. There had grown up in him a sense of difference, of distance; he felt that in having got rid of his awkwardness in speech and manner he had done but the least part to set him on a plane with the girl who wanted his friendship. So then there he must stop; it was madness to think further, to feel further. He must husband the energy of heart he was willing to lavish and add it instead to his muscle, his brain; he must forge ahead till the difference was bridged, until the distance lay behind, until . . .

He had got eastward of the Bank. Past him lumbered heavy drays, drawn by patient, way-sure horses, while the drivers huddled snoring on their box-seats. They were bringing the produce of the fields to be devoured by the dwellers of the town. Ah, what a hungry, ravenous city it was! God help the one that got into its clutches, and did not prove too tough a morsel for its maw. Leuw almost laughed; it would find him tough enough; it would break its teeth on him—Leuw Lipcott was no vegetable-marrow.

A little way on he passed the East London meat-market. Dozens of men were already hard at work loading the carcasses of sheep and bullocks on to the hurdle wagons that were to distribute them to the dealers. Leuw could distinguish between the beasts that had been pole-axed and those which had been

killed according to the Mosaic rite. The former had about them a look of uncanny starkness, symbolic of the rebellious spirit in which they had submitted to their fate. The latter—Leuw felt conscious of the curiousness of his fancy—showed calm and resigned in their death. Leuw remembered reading about the furious controversies which, especially on the Continent, raged concerning the merits and demerits of the Mosaic method. It seemed to him that his observation might almost constitute a serious contribution to the question.

On and on he strode. Near the great Assembly Hall, where his brethren were wont to worship in their thousands on the High Festivals, he met a group of wedding-guests trudging wearily home, the men limp and wan, the women, white-shawled, looking like so many ghosts in the gathering dawn. Ghosts? Leuw drew himself up taut, as though in protest against the suggestion. His life contained no spectres; it was all morning, the essence of daylight. It flashed through his soul the radiance of hope; it undulated in his pulses with billows of youth and strength; his heart cried out lustily. The future was his, and the future held everything.

CHAPTER XX

"THIS is Thursday, ain't it, Leuw?" enquired old Christopher towards the evening of the next day but one.

"Quite right," replied Leuw joyfully, for Christopher's question betokened a more accurate count of time than he had been capable of lately, and hence a return towards a normal condition. But Leuw was speedily disillusioned.

"How do you think I know?" went on Christopher, with a cunning smile. "How do you think I know?"

He dived into his pocket and fetched out a stick, some three inches in length, notched at intervals.

"Now, look here, Leuw. I know there's seven days to the week. Every morning I cut a notch into this here stick o' wood, and when there's seven notches, then it's Thursday again. Now you can guess why I want it to be Thursday."

Of course Leuw could guess. According to an arrangement, which was almost a contract, and dated back to the very commencement of their partnership. Leuw and Christopher spent their Thursday evenings together.

Before the old man's breakdown this had, as a rule, meant a visit to one of the East End theatres, with Christopher defraying all expenses; but now they took it quietly, chatting away in the workshop-parlor till eleven or even later. For Leuw tried to delay as long as possible the wistful look Christopher gave him at

parting, and which sometimes haunted him throughout the night. It came back to him now.

"It's no use, Christopher," he said almost sternly. "You'll have to give in and live at home with us."

"No, Leuw," said Christopher with the stubbornness of old age, "not yet, at least. I'd be making a bad bargain over the deal. You see, here I've got you with me the whole day; suppose I was livin' at your place, I'd only be with you an hour or two of an evening and perhaps not that, because it'll be poor fun for an able-bodied chap to mope along of a tumble-down old carcass like me. And for another thing," he went on, forestalling Leuw's remonstrance, "I've somehow got an idea as once I leave this here shop, I'll never set foot in it again. And this here shop, you must know, is the oldest pal I've got, seein' as it's grown old along o' me. And that would finish me off quicker nor everything."

Leuw did not have the heart to press his point, because the old man evidently meant what he said.

"I want to ask you something," began Christopher, as Leuw came in after putting up the shutters outside, and proceeded straightway to set the kettle on the hob. "Are you good at telling dreams?"

"Can't say I ever went in for the thing," replied Leuw.

"D'you know why? Because o' late I've taken to dreamin' o' Syd Mitchell."

"Well, you couldn't dream of anybody better, while you're at it," remarked Leuw busily.

"I dare say I couldn't; but," Christopher shook his head disapprovingly, "he's gettin' a bit of a nuisance, is Solly Myers. There he comes at nights and sits

by the side o' my bed, tellin' me yarns about the old times when we laid under canvas together, holdin' on to the tent-pegs for fear the wind should whisk it off. . . . Well, and what's the upshot of it? Last night, when he didn't turn up as usual, I goes out to find him, all the way to Kingdom come, and there he stands at the door, and says he, 'Crixey,' says he, 'you're late—we thought you'd deserted.' 'We?' says I, 'Yes,' says he, 'the whole company's up here, captain and all, only he's a general now; hurry up, we're just goin' to fall in; there goes the bugle, d'you hear?' And just then I catches a sound, more like drummin' than tootlin', and same time I feels icy cold all over, and a hand chokes me by the throat; and then I wakes up and finds myself standin' in the fender with the fire-tongs across my toes . . ."

A terrible burst of coughing stopped Christopher's narrative, which had dragged itself thus far with many a break and jerk and gasp. Quickly Leuw held up the glass, for which the palsied old hand was blindly fumbling.

"If you say another word to-night, I'll go straight home," he threatened when the attack was over.

"I'm all right now, Leuw," replied Christopher, "it never comes on but once of a night. And the talkin' don't hurt. I sits here jabberin' to myself like a monkey the whole evenin', whether or no."

Leuw did not reply, partly to set Christopher a good example, and partly because at that moment the resolution, which had been ripening in his mind all day, attained full growth. He, however, decided on not imparting it to Christopher till the morrow.

The old man seemed right. His complaint had had

its way, and for the time being, it appeared, was content to rest on its laurels. Christopher appreciated the relief, and lay back in his chair smiling almost happily on Leuw.

"I'm going to read you the paper," said the latter. "There's trouble again on the Indian frontier."

Christopher acquiesced eagerly, and Leuw set to work on the penny paper which he purchased unfailingly every morning on his way to the shop; it made him feel every inch a City man. Steadily he read on, until, casting a casual glance at Christopher, he saw him leaning back with eyes closed. Leuw continued, sinking his voice by degrees so as not to come to an abrupt stop, which might have startled the old man. But Christopher was not dozing, and divining Leuw's intent, sat up quite wide-awake.

"No, no," he said, half in protest, half in apology. "I was only thinkin' about something else."

"I dare say you've had enough of this," smiled Leuw, folding up his paper; "but mind—no speeches."

"Well, I don't know exactly how many words it'll take me to say it in, but I'll cut it short to please you. And perhaps I oughtn't to mention it at all."

"Why not?"

"Because it's something about your people."

"Then out with it, by all means," said Leuw jauntily. "We invite criticism, you know."

"Seems to me," said Christopher slowly, "you're jolly well stocked with most things, you Hebrew folk, but you're very short in one."

"And that is?"

"Sol Myerses, by your leave."

Leuw paused in the act of giving his paper a final smooth, and looked intently at Christopher.

"Very short, indeed," repeated the latter. "My idea would be to keep a few of 'em, say a hundred thousand or so, stored up ready to send out in a brace of shakes just wherever one o' you are gettin' jumped on. If that don't stop the jumpin' on, I don't know what will."

Leuw smiled indulgently at Christopher's fancy.

"It's very good of you to trouble about us," he said, "but you don't quite understand the situation."

Christopher looked disappointed.

"So you don't think it would work?" he asked.

"Not exactly the way you mean," replied Leuw soberly. "But there's a good deal in what you say all the same."

"I thought I wasn't drivelin'. You know, Leuw, I'm feeling' clear in the head to-night, something wonderful."

And Christopher burst into a hoarse laugh, the sound of which did not at all accord with his vaunted clear-headedness. It set Leuw trembling.

"What's the joke now?" he asked, outwardly calm.

"Thinkin' of how the boys thought Syd Mitchell a bit of a wizard all along o' the way he ferreted out the liquor for 'em—that was one o' the things he reminded me of the night before last."

"Ferreted out the liquor? Where? when?"

Christopher gave a few more gurgles ere he proceeded:

"We'd been trampin' it through the snow all day, bein' quartered at night, me and him and six more of us, in a little dram-shop; but hanged if we could find

dram or drop or anything but empty bottles, and we wanted a drink, you bet. Jingo! how we wanted a drink. And each time one of us went near to ask her, she snarled and clawed at us . . .”

“Who did?”

“Why, didn’t I tell you?” said Christopher fretfully. “She’d been left behind all alone by mistake like—couldn’t have been more’n sixteen, and a regular wildcat spitfire, the prettiest thing in petticoats I’d seen since we left Plymouth harbor. Says Syd Mitchell: ‘Boys, give me fightin’ room!’ And, bless me, ten minutes after, the grog was steamin’ our noses off.”

“Did he tell you how he managed it?” queried Leuw eagerly.

“That he did; it all came out with the rest of him that night before Inkerman. Seemingly he spotted by the looks of her that she was one of his own lot, and he up and talks to her in her own lingo, and kids her that we was sent specially to take all the Jews to Palestine, and that he was King Solomon come to life again, and if she’d show him where they’d hidden the stuff, he’d make her his queen as soon as he had a little spare time. No wonder they made him out a wizard . . .”

The broad grin on Christopher’s face changed to an agonized look, and he wildly clutched the ledges of his chair. So he remained a full minute, with Leuw staring at him helplessly, and then the spasm was over. But Christopher took the hint.

“I think I’ll turn in early for once,” he said bravely; “and since you’re here, you might as well give me a hand-up.”

When Leuw came out of the bedroom, he pretended to obey Christopher's strict injunction to go straight home, by descending and slamming the shop door from the inside. Then, taking off his boots, he crept up the staircase, and sat on the top step keeping his sick-watch. Quarter after quarter chimed from the neighboring church clock, until at half-past one Leuw could no longer master the thought of his mother's probable anxiety. The breathing from the other side came heavy, yet measured and regular. Leuw deemed he could safely leave his post. After all, in another few hours he could dispose of this terrible responsibility. Inch by inch he stole down, and let himself out noiselessly.

The next morning he was early at the shop and not alone; Mrs. Lipcott came with him. As Leuw turned the key in the door, his lips framed into a smile at the jest wherewith he intended to greet the invalid:

"Christopher, my mother's downstairs to kidnap you."

But it was with no smile that he came bounding down again.

"Mother, there's a doctor ten doors up on the other side," he gasped.

"You go—I'll see to him upstairs," said Mrs. Lipcott.

But Leuw pushed her out without another word; if he went, it might save ten seconds, but the spectacle upstairs was not fit for a woman. Even the doctor thought so as he locked the bedroom door on himself and Leuw.

Christopher died hard. It took him the greater part of the forenoon to struggle through the Valley

of the Shadow, until the light from Beyond came to meet him, and woke his numbed brain into a last flicker of thought. He smiled wanly as he caught sight of Leuw standing close to the bed with hard-set face.

"In at the death, eh, Leuw?" he whispered. "Now, then, while there's time. I've got a favor to ask you: I want you to let this here shop die with me—that'll sort of give me a pal on the journey, but what's more, it's your own good I'm thinkin' of; you'll know what I mean. Thank you, Leuw, for—hullo, what's this, reveillé already? Syd, boy, hurry up with that there pipe-clay—hurry—hurry . . ."

And by an irony of fate Christopher Donaldson, who had always taken life leisurely, died with the word of haste on his lips.

Never had the loneliness, which had been the old man's portion, stood out so glaringly as when it came to paying him the last honors on earth. Leuw found there was absolutely no one to share with him the mourning coach in which he followed the hearse to the suburban Presbyterian cemetery, where Christopher had some ten years ago purchased the grave on the strength of which he used jestingly to call himself a landed proprietor. Mrs. Lipcott had not offered to take part in the funeral, because it is contrary to the practice of her coreligionists to admit the presence of women at burial ceremonies. And Leuw had not insisted on her company, because his solitariness came to him as an unspeakable relief. For once he could afford himself the luxury of giving vent to the promptings of his inmost heart. It

made him feel singularly grateful to find that he had not outgrown that greatest privilege of childhood, the privilege of tears; and, indeed, as he huddled back into the furthestmost corner of the coach, his hands to his face, he wondered if ever again he would imagine himself so vividly the little knickerbockered lad who had followed his father on the same errand—God, how long ago it all seemed!

By the time the little cemetery chapel was reached, Leuw had drilled himself back into something like his usual demeanor. Reverently he listened to the unfamiliar text of the burial service. The officiating clergyman, droning out the sentences with the apathy of stale habit, had no idea of the inspiring object-lesson by which he might have enriched his soul, had he known or cared. There stood the Jew, heart-broken and desolate at the bier of his friend, the Gentile, as though the history of mankind were unsullied by the red hand of race-hatred, by the internecine warfare of creeds, giving earnest, by mean and lowly example, that the primordial instincts of man would yet assert themselves and tread under heel the artificial distinctions between phylactery and crucifix. Here it was to be seen how Hebrew and Christian, differing from one another in all the degrees along the scale of human disparity, could become as David and Jonathan, and shame into silence the lying prophets who cried out against the millennial brotherhood of the peoples when the trespass of Cain will be redeemed in God's good time. Such object-lessons are haply to be learnt every hour of the day, if the world would but dash from its eyes the films of purblindness, which will not let it see that, just as it has made itself its own purgatory, so it can fashion itself into its own heaven.

"Thud—thud—thud," went the clods of earth on the coffin-lid, reminding Leuw of the thump of Christopher's wooden leg; but he shook off the fancy hastily. Not with such outward tokens would he associate the memory of his dear, dead friend; Christopher's memory would never require any token of sound or sight. Even long before he had died, the old man had become to Leuw a symbol, an emblematic presence, permeating his whole future and embodying itself only in worthy thought, in generous deed. And so the truest memorial he could raise to the man who was to him the largest creditor for whom his career would ever find room, was in the shape and substance of his own life. And thereby Leuw was conscious he had set himself the highest standard of action to which he could possibly reach. The effect was reciprocal, too. So long as he remembered Christopher, he would be sure of himself; and it was without any qualm of self-belief that he thought of the legend which the tombstone was to bear:

"Christopher Donaldson. Unforgettable."

"There he is, put away nice and warm, sir," said one of the grave-diggers with an expectant leer.

Leuw shook himself back into his surroundings, handed the man some silver, and walked slowly away to the railway station close by. He had told the coach not to wait for him; he dreaded the numbing influence of the cushions on his brain, which had not rested in slumber for the last two nights. He did not want to sleep; he wanted to be wide-awake; he had to be. For he was just about to put his hand on the pivot of his

life, and the question at issue was whether or not he was to give it its most decisive twist. "Let the shop die with me—you'll know what I mean." The old man had asked it as a favor. Yes, Leuw understood what he meant. So, after all, the blurred old eyes had been keen enough to sight the restlessness Leuw thought he had so skilfully kept under cover; and the favor the dead man had conditioned for himself—selfishly, as it would appear at first blush—was nothing but one last loving forethought for Leuw's own welfare. Thus Leuw construed it, and rightly from his own point of view. But for Christopher's definite injunction Leuw would have felt compelled, as a mere matter of piety, to keep within the constraint of the shop's premises. And how he would have endured that, even only for another year or two, he trembled to think of; and perhaps by the time he had, to his own satisfaction, fulfilled his tribute of obligation, his energies might have become crippled irreparably.

What, however, told most with him was that Christopher's death should have made him master of himself just at the moment when his desire to march at his own pace had almost developed into a frenzy.

As a steady background to the unwonted sensations of the last few days had stood out his recollection of the big house in St. John's Wood. Occasionally it had even come between himself and his sorrow for Christopher; he had thrust it away angrily, but it would not be denied. And he knew why. The big house represented to him the little girl who lived therein, and who—through his own doing, he admitted—had transformed herself into the criterion of his success. And measured by that rule, he had fallen

lamentably short; he had achieved nothing, or little more. Ever since his visit the other night, he had been put totally out of conceit with his present mode of "getting on." If he continued thus heaping sand-grain on sand-grain, how long would it take him to pile up a house half as big? Years and years and years; and meantime the little girl would grow up into a woman—she was doing it now—and there were other men about whose fathers had done all the grain-heaping for them, and one of them . . . Leuw clenched his fists. Christopher's last words on earth came back to him: "hurry up—hurry—hurry." At last he had found the true key-note of his life—the wheels of the jolting, stampeding train were thundering them into his soul—"hurry up—hurry—hurry." Yes, yes, he would hurry up. But not here—not here, in the weary old land, effete with the travail of bringing forth millions to her exploiters, but away in the distant wonderland, where, from all accounts, Fortune sat on a throne of gold, flinging her richest prizes to those who knew how to wheedle her into a smile. He would not wheedle her; he would stand before her, asking for the hire due to him who worked honestly with his shirt-sleeves rolled up, with no legerdemain, no trickery. . . . "Hurry up—hurry—hurry," thundered the train; "hurry up, hurry, hurry," echoed his soul.

Leuw went straight home. The shop, of course, was closed. It was to know that the senior member of the firm of Donaldson & Lipcott was dead; and that would prepare it for the more momentous changes that it was to undergo.

Lovingly Mrs. Lipcott stroked her son's cheek; the

caress seemed to put a noose about his heart that choked it. She misunderstood his silence.

"Don't grieve so," she said. "Was he ever happier than he is now? Don't grudge him it."

Leuw's voice at last forced itself passage. "Mother," he said, looking at her, "you ask me to be strong. I'm going to ask you to be strong yourself."

Mrs. Lipcott grew pale, but she smiled nevertheless. "Strong for what, Leuw?"

"To bear my going away from you."

"For long?" How pitifully the words pretended to appear steady.

"I don't know, mother. For years, perhaps, but I promise you I shall make them as few as possible."

It was Leuw who had to resume the conversation. "I'm a brute, mother; I ought not to have sprung it on you so suddenly."

"Make your mind easy on that, Leuw," replied Mrs. Lipcott; "it's no surprise for me. I was prepared."

"Prepared?" echoed Leuw, astonished.

"Yes, Leuw. I was getting too happy, and I felt I had to take some precaution—in case, you know. And your going away was the very idea I hit on for my special bogy. Every night, as I went to bed, I thought to myself: 'To-morrow Leuw may be saying good-by.' And that's why it doesn't come the least bit unexpected to me."

"You expected it, because it was the very thing you wished wouldn't turn out true," said Leuw sadly; "but in any case I did wrong. I ought at least to have paid you the compliment of asking you before I made up my mind."

"I'm glad you weren't so foolish as to play the

hypocrite to me, Leuw. What could I have answered? You would only have appeared a good son at the expense of making me out a bad mother. You know nothing would have stopped you."

"I am afraid not. I want to go. I must go. The whole world seems to be shouting at me: 'South Africa.'"

"And when do you start?"

"I don't know. I must sell the shop first; and then—the sooner I am off the sooner I shall return."

"Yes, that's true—the sooner he will return," said Mrs. Lipcott half to herself, her hands working nervously, as though to drag the distant day nearer.

"Speak up, mother," cried Leuw vehemently; "say everything you want to say, and make things as hard for me as you can. I don't deserve any better."

"All right, then—I'll take you at your word, Leuw," replied Mrs. Lipcott, smiling mistily; "I'll punish you by humbling your pride a little. I'm not a bit sorry you're going—not the least little atom, so there."

"For God's sake, mother, don't smile like that; you don't know how you're hurting me," said Leuw with a gulp.

The gulp was contagious; it developed into a sob, and the sob into something more. And then Leuw was satisfied, for his mother's tears were the sanction and the blessing without which he would not have dared to go forth on his enterprise.

The negotiations for the sale of the shop kept Leuw somewhat longer than he had anticipated. Offers came in numerously enough, but he stood hard on his bargain, not so much as a commercial deal, but be-

cause he was eager to make the best provision possible for his mother. After two weeks he succeeded in obtaining his figure; the same morning he went and booked his passage on the steamer leaving the following Saturday.

The sale of the shop-fixtures, stock, and good-will, realized for Leuw two hundred and fifty pounds. In addition to this there was the eighty odd pounds he had saved up in the bank. Of Christopher's private belongings in the way of furniture Leuw only reserved for himself the arm-chair and the tools with which the old man had worked; the rest was mere lumber, fit at best for firewood. But Christopher had left behind something more valuable, an investment producing forty pounds annually. He had made this over to Leuw already during his lifetime, about a year ago, when the first of his subsequent attacks had warned him of the beginning of the end. Leuw had taken it, and had spent every penny of the first yearly payment, and something more from his own account, in defraying the expenses of the medical attendance and nourishment which Christopher would otherwise have grudged himself.

The income of the investment Leuw, of course, set aside for his mother; it would pay comfortably for the rent of the house. Leuw would not hear of Mrs. Lipcott's suggestion to give it up and remove into lodgings; he knew how dear the new *ménage* had become to her heart, and what a wrench it would be to her to resign it. Of the three hundred and thirty-five pounds derived from the shop and his savings, he apportioned to her two hundred, which ought to maintain her easily for the next two years. And if by the

time she had reached the end of her resources Leuw was unable to—but there was no question of that. It never struck Mrs. Lipcott that Leuw was putting her to the risk of a serious speculation; and Leuw himself could desire no stronger guarantee for the success of his venture than the calm and utter confidence with which his mother looked forward to its issue. It was not till all his arrangements had been completed in detail that Leuw wrote to inform Phil of his intention.

"Now, mind, Phil," ended up the letter, "I particularly want you to notice this: don't interrupt yourself and come rushing up to town to see me off and all that sort of thing. It isn't necessary. What we said the night we took leave of each other at Mrs. Duveen's house will hold good, although we may be separated much longer than we then thought. I should have nothing to add to it, and I am sure you neither. Yours fraternally, Leuw."

Phil honored his brother's request, because he suspected the chief motive of it was Leuw's tension of feelings, which he was unwilling to increase by the strain of another parting; and, indeed, Phil himself felt that another parting would be something of an anti-climax. The words they had addressed to each other that evening were instinct with a significance which it would be sacrilege to cheapen by repetition. So Phil, in his reply, eschewed the emotional side of the question for the practical, and devoted his letter mainly to expressing his approval of Leuw's resolution. The one touch of sentiment in it was his assurance that, as far as he was concerned, their mother would not be allowed to forget for an instant that she had two sons.

Immediately on receipt of Phil's letter, Leuw penned a note to Mrs. Duveen asking when he might come to make his adieux. The reply came the same evening in the shape of Mrs. Duveen and Dulcie. Mrs. Lipcott was a little mystified by the apprehension to be read in Mrs. Duveen's face. Leuw saw nothing of it, but to him the questioning dismay in Dulcie's eyes was unmistakable. Was it—his heart leaped at the thought—for the reason he desired? In answer to Mrs. Duveen's questions, Leuw gave an account of the events which induced him to go abroad, of course, only the events which he could divulge without allowing an insight into the inner machinery of his motives.

Mrs. Duveen listened with a despondency which even Leuw could not help noticing. It surprised and touched him.

"And you have quite made up your mind?" she asked finally.

"Quite. Mother and I are fully agreed," replied Leuw.

Mrs. Duveen turned resolutely to Mrs. Lipcott. "Won't you show me over your house, Dinah?" she asked.

"There is absolutely nothing in it for you to see," replied Mrs. Lipcott a little disconcerted.

"Everything that is yours interests me," said Mrs. Duveen. "Come."

Then Mrs. Lipcott's woman's wit asserted itself. She took Mrs. Duveen to her bedroom.

"What do you want to tell me, Rose?" she asked.

"I thought you would catch my meaning," said Mrs. Duveen feverishly. "I want to tell you that we made no allowance for this."

"For what?"

"For Leuw's leaving you."

"But I don't see—"

"Yes, you do, only you are too large-hearted to say so. You know that Leuw's going away must make a difference in the arrangements we have come to concerning Phil."

"But you are mistaken, Rose."

"No, Dinah, I am not. You are going to be very lonely, and you surely don't think I shall be so wicked as to keep from you, for my own benefit, the one on whom you have a claim to relieve your loneliness."

Mrs. Lipcott shook her head obstinately. "And again I say you are wrong. One of my sons could never make up for the other, either in my eyes or in my heart. Each of them has his proper place there, and that he shall keep—anything else would not be fair to the other. If Phil came back to me here, it would only remind me too strongly that Leuw is away. Believe me, dear, I am not afraid of being alone; I shall have such pleasant thoughts to keep me company. And, besides, you see, there is the future."

"Which has helped many a weary soul over the present," murmured Mrs. Duveen to herself. "Dinah, one last question: Are you sure of yourself?"

"Quite."

"And you will tell me any moment you begin to have the slightest pang of doubt?"

"Yes, I shall tell you."

"Dinah," went on Mrs. Duveen eagerly, "I have a suggestion on the tip of my tongue, but I know better than to make it outright; one learns to know the

parents best through their children. But I shall hint at it. You have a home of your own; keep it. But my home is yours as often as you want to make it so. Will you remember?"

"I shall remember, Rose."

"And do more than remember, I adjure you, Dinah. Whenever I shall look at Phil, I shall think of you sitting here, hugging your thoughts to yourself. And you know how I shall feel. Promise you will be very good to me."

And Mrs. Lipcott promised gladly—for her own sake more than the other's. True, she could have her thoughts for companions whenever she chose; but could she be sure they would always look at her with smiling faces?

"Think you'll be away long?" Dulcie had started the conversation downstairs.

"Can't say at all. I dare say I'll stop there till I've made it worth my while going out."

"And won't you be afraid to live among those strange people? Ma says they're black, most of them."

"Oh, I don't mind the color. I'll pretend to myself they're all chimney-sweeps."

"Now, please, I won't be talked to like a baby. You answer me properly or not at all."

"Well, if you want to know, I am a bit afraid—not of the blacks, though. I have made up my mind to do such a tremendous lot out there, and what I'm afraid of is that I may be disappointed."

"I should be disappointed, too," slipped from Dulcie,

"What's that?" asked Leuw eagerly.

"Never mind," said Dulcie flushing. "What does Phil say about it? Is he coming to see you off?"

Leuw answered briefly, wishing all the time he had insisted on assuring himself that he had heard her aright.

"Now, you've asked me a lot of questions," he went on. "Suppose I ask you one for a change?"

"As many as you like."

"No, only one. Are you sorry I'm going away?"

"I don't know," said Dulcie, gazing past him.

"You ought to be; you've got something to do with it."

Dulcie looked blank astonishment. "I don't understand."

"You're used to softer chairs than the one you're sitting on, aren't you?"

"Yes, ours are much softer. But why don't you explain?"

"I have explained."

"You haven't. You said something about chairs."

"That's the explanation," returned Leuw doggedly. "You'll see it right enough—in a year or two, if you haven't forgotten me by then. And talking of forgetting reminds me of something," he went on in trepidation, for the main business of the evening was yet to be transacted, and their *tête-à-tête* might be interrupted any moment. "I say, do you know what this is?"

Dulcie, utterly confused by Leuw's excited manner and his rapid change of subject, stared in perplexity at the scrap of paper he held out to her.

"I am very sorry I made you hold my hand—" she read aloud, breaking off with a shamefaced laugh. "Why, that's the note I sent you after we fetched Phil. Fancy your keeping it all this time; I should never have believed I ever wrote so badly."

"If I give it back to you, will you let me have another one instead?" asked Leuw hoarsely. "Out there, you know."

"I must ask ma first," said Dulcie softly, "but I don't suppose she'll object. Of course, you'll write first."

"Let's shake hands on that."

Dulcie complied readily. "Why, yours is trembling," she said.

"Not a bit—you're only squeezing all the fright out of me," laughed Leuw buoyantly.

The laugh echoed in Leuw's heart, and shone out upon his face the whole of the two days remaining between him and his departure. His cheerfulness infected Mrs. Lipcott, and converted the trying suspense of the interval into something like joyous anticipation. The talk was not of Leuw's going, but of his coming. Leuw had a hard struggle to keep himself from blurting out to his mother the secret which he was taking with him as his most precious equipment on his enterprise. He was going to keep in touch with Dulcie; he would have access to her thoughts, he had the certainty that he would not be cast out and forgotten. He felt a sincere pity for the obstacles which would be unfortunate enough to come into his path; they were going to have a very hard time of it.

Leuw had made up his mind to pay no farewell calls; that was a courtesy which he accorded only to the dead—his father and Christopher. But chance threw him into the way of bidding good-by to at least one acquaintance—just the one whom, if he had had his choice, he would have wished to see before all others. On the Friday morning, as he was making his final purchases, he encountered Yellow Joe.

"It's all right—I'm keeping 'em up, figures and handwriting," said the latter, hastening to forestall Leuw's customary admonition.

Leuw smiled a little, but immediately became grave again. "I'm very sorry, Joe, but you'll think I've been hoaxing you. Do you know what I meant by asking you to keep them up? I knew that sooner or later I should want an assistant in my shop, and I thought I couldn't do better than have you."

"And now?" asked Joe, pale with eagerness.

"I haven't got a shop any more. I've given it up. To-morrow I leave for South Africa."

"Yes, but you're coming back, aren't you?"

"Please God, I am."

"Well, then, I'll wait for you, if you don't mind. You're the safest card to bet on that I know of."

"Thank you, Joe. But in the meantime you'll have a try yourself, of course."

"I shan't get rusty. I've got to keep myself in good working trim for you, haven't I?"

The steamer would not leave till Saturday about midday, but Leuw was to start off from London that afternoon, so as not to profane the Sabbath by the train-journey to Southampton. Mrs. Lipcott wished it so.

"Keep God's Law as long as you can," she said, "afterward you must deal with Him your own way."

"I have thought of that already," said Leuw. "But I don't mind dealing with God. He allows liberal discount."

Mrs. Lipcott had some little difficulty in obtaining Leuw's consent to accompany him to Waterloo Station; but for the first time since many years she mustered up firmness enough to make her will prevail.

"Are you afraid I'll make a scene?" she asked reproachfully.

"I want to spare your feelings, that's all; people will be looking," replied Leuw.

The cab was at the door. Leuw arose from the meal he had been trying in vain to do justice to, and looked round him leisurely.

"I don't think I've forgotten anything," he said with as much composure as if he expected to be back that evening.

Mrs. Lipcott was true to her word. She did not make a scene.

"Mother," said Leuw, as the third signal bell went.

"My son—my son," murmured Mrs. Lipcott. A burning kiss, and that was all.

"What would you like best to-night?" Leuw had asked his mother as they sat in the cab.

"A message from you," she had replied.

"You shall have it," Leuw had promised her; "it will be home before you."

And when Mrs. Lipcott got back, and was about to transfer the silver candlesticks from the mantle-piece to the table, she found beneath them the letter Leuw

had written the night before, and had hidden where she was most likely to find it. He said but little; still that little was a good deal more than his somewhat niggardly tongue could ever have got itself to dispense of his heart's overflow. And as Mrs. Lipcott read, the two candle-lights gloried out, through the blur over her eyes, into a score of stately, flaming aureoles.

PART III

CHAPTER XXI

IN Rupert Street, East London, are situate the model dwellings which practically pioneered the movement for better poor-housing in the metropolis. Of the flats contained in the buildings, that on the ground floor of Block A was an easy first in the matter of its appointments; the numerous signs of comfort and refinement showed at a glance that the occupant had taken up his abode amid the squalid surroundings more from choice than necessity. The occupant was Phil. He was sitting, this November evening, gazing pensively into the fire; he had done so for the last half-hour. At last he yawned, stretched himself, and looked at his watch.

"By Jove, only six o'clock," he said to himself. "Another hour to kill before I take my classes. But how?"

He reflected for a moment, and his face lit up. "That's it—let us read in the Book of Chronicles." He went to his writing desk, unlocked it, and produced a number of diary volumes. He opened that marked One, and looked at the date of the first entry.

"Goodness me," he mused, with a start; "eight years and more since I went up to Cambridge! And if so, will somebody please tell me what has become of those

eight years? But I suppose diary will know. So here goes."

He turned a page or two, and then his glance fell on an entry, and he smiled.

"October 10th," he read. "My first adventure up here. Was saying my morning prayers when Mrs. Hall, the bedmaker, glides in—she always glides—to lay breakfast. She sees the phylactery strips round my head and arms, gives a yell, and does considerably more than glide out. For a moment, I am as startled as she, till I recollect. I finish prayers, and go to her and explain. She was not surprised to hear I was a Jew; in fact, she admitted she always thought I was a heathen of some sort, because I was not required to keep chapels. As to the incident this morning, her first impression had been—as I am informed by Broughton, who keeps on my staircase—that the poor young gentleman had gone balmy, and was playing at gee-gee with himself."

"Oct. 12th. On coming home this evening find my rooms badly 'ragged.' Sit down there and then, and pour out the vials of my wrath in verse. Take the thing down to the porter's lodge and pin it to notice-board."

"Oct. 13th. Porter's lodge besieged all day by men reading my skit. Among them Edwards, who edits 'Cantabrian.' Comes to my rooms for permission to let it go into next number. Give it, of course."

"Oct. 15th. 'The Ragers' has caught on. Everybody talking about it. Overhead in the reading-room of the 'Union' and elsewhere: 'Who is this P. L.-D?' 'Young cub of a Trinity Fresher, I understand.' 'Jove, isn't he a corker?' 'Rippingest

thing since Calverly.' 'Take jolly good care not to tread on his corns,' etc., etc. In the evening the 'Raggers' come in a body to offer apologies. Insist on my accepting a case of whiskey in exchange for the bottle they smashed. I insist on their staying to sample it. A merry evening."

"Oct. 20th. Make my first speech at the 'Union.' Sit down on reaching time-limit. House yells at me to get up and resume. Do so, and for the joke of the thing pulverize my own arguments. Am making more acquaintances than I shall know what to do with."

"Oct. 24th. To-day was my third Saturday up here. All day I felt ill at ease, uncomfortable—much more so than I had done on each of the two previous Saturdays. In my heart there was a sense of something lacking. After lunch I went out for a walk, refusing several offers of company. I wanted solitude to puzzle the thing out. Succeeded. I was discontented, because, save for an additional prayer or two, I had let the Sabbath go without some distinctive mark upon it—had let it get lost in the crowding routine of the week. The evil having been discovered, the remedy required no searching. I am not accustomed to praying alone on the Sabbath; my thoughts seemed to have taken to themselves a voice that cried in the wilderness. I miss the inspiriting contact of the congregation. Why should there be no congregation here? I hurry home and glance down the list of University residents; it contains scores of names with a Jewish ring—ample material for achieving my project. To-morrow is Sunday—the conventional visiting day. I determine to set at defiance the stiff aca-

demic etiquette, which does not permit the first-year man to call on his seniors without having been called on first, and make a round of personal calls."

" Oct. 25th. A most fatiguing day; climbed more staircases than would cover the distance to the top of Snowdon. Result, on the whole, satisfactory. A tremendous disappointment met me at the outset. My first half-a-dozen calls convinced me of what I had lost sight of in my eagerness, that a large percentage of Jewish-looking names belonged to Welshmen. One of them, the captain of the 'Rugger' football team, pointed this fact out to me with more than necessary emphasis of diction. Another was the secretary of the 'Varsity' branch of the Young Men's Christian Association. He gave me a hearty welcome, guessing in me a recruit. After the first shock of the surprise on hearing of my errand, he redoubled his cordiality. He said it was the finger of God which had guided me there—the straying sheep to the fold. I controverted him with the earnestness of conviction which his own sincerity deserved. A fine, manly fellow. The almost pathetic look he gave me as I declined his invitation to attend their service that evening touched me to the heart. Then I had four strokes of good fortune in rapid succession. In each case I found a coreligionist eager to give his co-operation to the scheme. None of them, I found, conform to the outward observances of our faith, but their racial emotions are clamoring for expression; for the time being I felt like an apostle. I convened them, with two others I came across later on, to my rooms this evening, and the Cambridge Hebrew Congregation has been founded. With the addition of three of the towns-

people whom I know to be Jews, we shall make up the necessary quorum of ten. The service will be held in my rooms for the present, and we have subscribed for the purchase of a Scroll of the Law for the reading of the Sabbath portion."

Phil turned several pages before his eyes halted on another entry. "Nov. 20th," he read. "A most welcome surprise this morning—a letter from Leuw direct to me. The post-mark is Cape Town. He writes little, only just that he is well, and is going further up country. Good luck go with him."

"Jan. 30th. Have just been told officially that I have won the 'Craven.' Robinson, my tutor, had said long before the exam. that it was a certainty for me; I half believed him myself. I am so used to having things my own way that I am longing for a defeat to save me from getting *blasé*. To get the 'Craven,' the blue riband of classical distinctions open to the whole 'Varsity,' in my first year! True, the thing is not without precedent, but still . . . Hang it, I wish I could get somebody to kick me hard. It's simply abominable, this cold-blooded complacency of mine. Phil, you're found out. You're a humbug. The quiet humility on which you pride yourself is all a sham—is worse than the most bouncing, but frank, conceit. On my honor, the next time I catch you developing prig symptoms, I'll take all your trophies and make a bonfire of them."

Phil paused with his finger on the page, and smiled to himself a little. How easily he had allowed himself to get ruffled in those days! He took things more calmly now; that was because he knew himself better, and could argue out the phenomena of his disposition

more rationally. He no longer mistook honest exultation over things honestly achieved for blatant self-glorifying. And as for priggishness, he knew the difference between an obtrusive mock modesty and outspoken self-respect. If only the people of his race had seen these things more clearly, they might have saved themselves much humiliation.

He turned more pages and yet more. It was not the first time he had read in his "Book of Chronicles," and he knew his favorite places. He was coming to one that was very dear to him.

"June 7th. May Week is in full swing; it is called 'May Week' because it never falls earlier than June. According to long-standing arrangement, Aunt, Dulcie, and Effie came up for it. Mother would not join them; but even if I use force, she will have to come to see me take my award on prize-day at the Senate House. Talking of which—Broughton has still not got over his surprise that he beat me for the Chancellor's Verse Medal. He read my doggerel before it was to be sent in, and said he was not going to make a fool of himself. He was awfully disappointed; he had so set his heart on getting the 'pot.' With real difficulty I persuaded him to let his poem go in. Mine came back—unread of course, because I happened to exceed time for sending in by one day; it was very careless of me. But this is a digression. We are having a high old time of it. The weather is glorious; our first boat went up a place last 'night.' Effie—I mean the girls, are creating a sensation wherever they are seen. They set each other off splendidly. Dulcie, with her sweet, delicate face, gives one an impression of gossamer and butterflies. Effie? That

note of interrogation means everything. I don't know what to say of her. Let's try, though. What a proud strong face she is getting! what a carriage! She steps along like a princess on the way to her kingdom. I almost feel sorry for the people she looks at; they must get an idea of what it is like to be struck by lightning. And her utter want of self-consciousness. She seems too proud to be proud of herself; I make up for her. What a swagger I am growing. I dare not show myself alone, because I am straightway mobbed with requests for introductions. Are they coming to the College dance to-morrow night? I don't know—they are so young, you see. Whereupon an immediate suggestion to despatch a deputation to Aunt. I know the dare-devils are capable of everything, especially in the May Week; and so, to save Aunt from the invasion, I promise solemnly to use my influence with her.

"A change has come into the relations between Effie and myself—a change which, on the one hand, makes us strangely distant, and, on the other, draws us more nearly together. It seems to me that whenever we look at each other, we ought to put our forefinger to our lips. I feel sort of guilty. It seems unfair to Aunt. There—hang my squeamishness. What's up? What's wrong? A girl and a boy get chummy together, and they don't care about shouting the thing out from the house tops. I never saw such a fellow for making his own troubles."

Again Phil paused—this time with such a tense air of thoughtfulness as though every fibre of his brain were strung tight. It was more than seven years since he had penned the above; and now—what post-

script had he to add? None. Effie and he were still chums. Their dealings with each other showed no implication of anything more—no half-revealed afterthought. The progress of the years had tempered it with a mature sympathy, had given to it the security of a full, mutual understanding. That was all. But was it all? Phil's look became tenser. He was standing face to face with himself; where was the need for prevarication? No, his heart had not kept within the range of a mere camaraderie; it had strained further afield. But he had a sure tether for its rebellious leap—the haunting sense of disloyalty to the woman to whom he owed so much, nay, everything. Not that he would dishonor her by the suspicion of a narrow jealousy at finding out that his fealty to her was to be made secondary to his allegiance to another; she had always been so generous, so loving-kind, that he dared not even look upon his self-abnegation as an act of requital. But be that as it might, he could not thrust the issue off much further. Day by day his feelings were crystallizing, and the surer he became of himself, the greater and more formidable grew his uncertainty of Effie. For Effie gave no sign—how could he expect it of Effie, the proud, the reticent? And, perhaps, while he was fondly hugging to himself his notion of chivalry to Mrs. Duveen, he was foolishly frittering away the great opportunity of his life, the dearest hope of his future. After all, he owed a duty to himself. . . .

Impatiently he passed his hand across his forehead as if to dash away the cobwebs behind it. It was always the same, whenever he endeavored to take counsel with himself on his dilemma—there were always

the same self-questionings ending in the same doubts and irresolution. Each time he determined that the next should bring him clearness; but the next never seemed to come. With a sigh he resumed the reading of his records, but the pages had lost their hold on his attention. Here and there his glance dwelt somewhat longer on some particular entry, making note of a letter from Leuw, some academic achievement or other—it was easy to see how his hand had trembled as it made the memorandum of his election to a Fellowship at his college. Then came pages on pages of references to his travels abroad, extending more or less over a period of two years, including a stay of six months in Germany, of the same length in Paris, and a flying visit to Russian territory, where his over-eager and incautious investigations into the condition of his coreligionists nearly landed him into prison as a spy, and necessitated an abrupt departure. After that came an entry which he read and re-read with an interest which the bald brevity of its wording hardly seemed to justify:

“Nov. 25th. Have taken up residence in Rupert Street.”

That was now two years ago. He had come there in accordance with the resolve, which, by virtue of its unflinching steadfastness of purpose, had taken to itself the sanctity of a vow. He had gone back among his people to repay, as far as he could, the debt he felt was due to them. The material advantages which had helped him on in his career had been a mere accident. But his capacity for making them bear fruit as he had done—that at least was no matter of chance. It was ingrained in him as his share of

the racial calibre, which was the inevitable outcome of a century-long combat wherein it was all thrust on the one side, and nothing but parry on the other. His share of it had been very liberal; all that had remained for him to do was to raise its level, ennoble it, in order to make it fit for the higher functions to which it was worthy of ministering. What shape and fashion his recompense was to take, he was himself yet undecided. He was there as a free-lance. He had not attached himself to any official organization, because he would not follow blindly in the beaten tracks, nor take for granted the infallibility of attempts, however much they had the prestige of precedent. He wished to see for himself; he wished to combine the somewhat blurred impressions of his youth with the clarified experience of his discreeter years and to heal with the confident touch of the physician for whom the constitution of his patient has no secret. Yet even while he was diagnosing, he would not refrain from those minor usefulnesses, which certainly would do no harm, and would, at the least, serve to keep his hand in practice till the time came for greater things. When the time came! More than once had it struck him that what to him seemed caution, might by others be construed into culpable cowardice. Well, even so. Was there not something laudable in his hesitation to take upon his shoulders a burden which, for want of support, he might have to let go crashing to the ground? It was not the possible hurt to his own vanity that he feared; but he would have it on his conscience that his failure, perhaps, might act as a bug-bear disheartening others, whose superior prudence would make success more of a foregone conclusion.

Besides, he might leave ruins to be cleared away before the new start could be made, and that would waste valuable time. And so he was waiting for re-inforcements. True, he knew of many whose help would be forthcoming, and was well worth the having; but their turn would not come till later on. For the very initiative the sole ally he was wanting and waiting for was his brother Leuw.

He closed the volume, and replaced it with the others in the drawer. It was a few minutes to seven. He took up and put into his coat pocket some loose sheets of paper, closely covered with his notes for the evening's lecture—an elementary exposition of the duties of citizenship. The class-room was situated just round the corner, and consisted of a now disused workshop, which Phil had received permission to turn to his own purpose. It was here that he assembled, two evenings in the week, the score or so of lads and young men whom Phil, by personal canvass in each case, had found to be amenable to the higher recreations after the day spent at the tailor's board or over the riveter's last, and whom he hoped to make the nucleus of that larger movement which was as yet awaiting its definite shape.

The hour's spell of retrospect which Phil had indulged in had resulted in making him feel restless and unsettled. His heart was not in his work to-night; and, besides, the prospect of a long, solitary evening was not particularly alluring. Mrs. Duveen and the girls, he was aware, were going to some affair or other, and to his mother's he already had been that morning. So it was with a sense of relief that he received the information, conveyed to him through the half-open

door by the lady of the house, to the effect that a gentleman—leastways she wasn't quite sure that he was a gentleman, because he only wore a "bowler" hat—had just called to see Mr. Duveen, and he wouldn't tell his name, and he was quite positive that Mr. Duveen would know him at sight. She had shown him into the parlor, and trusted to her luck that everything would be all right.

Phil thanked her, and told her to say he would be down presently. He had no idea who his visitor might be; probably some Cambridge friend, or more likely Uncle Bram, who had once or twice before sprung this welcome surprise on him. A few minutes later he brought his lecture to a close, and having seen the class out, hurried down with a smile of ready welcome on his lips. But the smile flickered out, as on entering the room he saw himself confronted by an utter stranger. The tiny jet of gas, which the lady of the house had lit, and of which she was at that moment making a note as an "extra" to be charged for when the rent came due, showed up little more of the stranger's face than a thick, though well-groomed, black beard.

"I am afraid you have the advantage of me," stammered Phil, disappointed.

The stranger emitted a low laugh. Phil gasped, fell back a pace or two, and then started forward impetuously:

"Leuw—in Heaven's name—it isn't you?"

"I think it is, Phil," was the smiling, if tremulous, reply.

"Leuw—God, it isn't possible!"

"Why, Phil, you are taking it even worse than mother," said Leuw, his voice now very shaky.

“ Oh, Leuw, I can't believe it—I can't believe . . . ”

And the lady of the house, feeling naturally entitled to know what went on in her own parlor, had the shock of seeing the usually so sedate and self-possessed Mr. Duveen sobbing away for dear life on the shoulder of the stranger in the “ bowler ” hat.

CHAPTER XXII

A FEW minutes afterwards the two brothers were walking through the streets back to Phil's rooms. Neither of them spoke, but they clung to each other's arm, as though they had quite made up their minds never again to let go hold of each other. Silently Phil landed Leuw into the softest chair, and then went back to the door, locked it, and with a glad little laugh put the key in his pocket.

"Now you're my prisoner, and you won't get free till I've had every syllable out of you," he cried buoyantly.

"That's something like what mother said, as I walked into the house about ten minutes after you had left there," smiled Leuw. "By the way, she hopes you won't be angry with her for not letting me come sooner, or for not sending you word. She wanted to have me all to herself for a little while, the foolish woman!"

"Yes, she certainly had a right to that," said Phil half to himself. "Did she recognize you?"

"You bet she did—knew me before I stepped into the house, by my knock, she says."

"I won't ask why you didn't tell us to expect you; you wouldn't be Leuw Lipcott if you did. But now you are here, are you going to stop, or are you going back?"

"That will depend on circumstances," replied Leuw with more gravity than the question seemed to warrant.

"And now, Leuw, one more query; how have you got on? It seems strange I should have to ask it, but you will admit your letters never went much beyond saying that you were alive. However, I suppose you think you have already answered it indirectly by the allowance of twelve pounds a month you have made mother during the last five years, with the option of her drawing as much again if she found it necessary."

"Yes, Phil, I can fairly say I have fallen on my feet," was Leuw's deliberate reply.

Phil was about to speak, but, on second thoughts apparently, he only fixed his gaze steadily on Leuw's face, and kept it there.

"I know what you are thinking of," said the latter quietly.

"Do you?" exclaimed Phil eagerly.

"Perfectly, and I shall save you the effort of asking. Yes, Phil, I know there are various ways of falling on one's feet, but mine was the straight way, be assured."

"Forgive me, Leuw; one hears of strange happenings out there, and a man sometimes has to make his own opportunities. I was certain the reason that you never touched in your letters on the particular nature of your doings was not that you had anything to conceal—forgive me, Leuw. . . ."

"There is nothing to forgive," replied Leuw, laying his hand re-assuringly on Phil's. "By Jove, though, it never struck me till this minute that such a natural construction could be put on my silence. Serves me jolly well right for being such a confoundedly secretive animal. Phil, thanks for having the courage to put the matter so straight to me, and so giving me a chance to set myself right with you. If

not, there might have been a kind of a limp in our dealing with each other, and I shouldn't have been able to find the lame spot."

"There, Leuw, never mind—we have done with that."

"Oh, have we done with it?" exclaimed Leuw. "Not if I know it. I've got to make you some reparation for having given you the pain of doubting your brother. I'll tell you my yarn from beginning to end—unless you think it will weary you."

Phil's reproachfulness was simply too great for words.

"It isn't very long, and you needn't prepare yourself for anything wildly exciting," continued Leuw. "No hairbreadth 'scapes, no treasure-troves—though I must say I've had my fair share of luck. I worked, and when I saw my chance I caught hold of it, and didn't let it go till I had squeezed it dry. I got away from Cape Town as soon as I could, only just staying long enough to fix up my little caravan, and struck out across country, as I wrote you at the time. The road was good to me, and by the time I got to the mines my stock of tin pots and earthenware was gone, and my outlay had come back to me twice its size."

"And then you bought a share in a mine," hazarded Phil.

"Yes, that's the conventional idea of it," smiled Leuw; "but you know, I always had a weakness for originality. As a matter of fact, I let the mines severely alone. I gathered my five senses into a bunch, and saw that the place had in it the makings of a big town. Others had done so before me, and were merrily buying up every inch of land they could lay

hands on near the settlement. I looked on quietly, and just when the grabbing was at its height there, I went and bought up a stretch of ground about two miles off the mines—got it for a song, and even then got laughed at for a crack-brained young idiot. I let them laugh; I had figured the thing out, and started building my shanty. If there is going to be a town, I calculated, there will have to be a fashionable neighborhood to it, and that, as likely as not, will be as far off as possible from the smell, and the noise, and the riff-raff of the mine-quarter. So I waited; and in the meanwhile, just to keep myself from getting bored, I started that mineral water factory I'd been having on the brain for the last year or so, and in three months my one little machine had grown to four big ones, and I was getting troubled where I should hang the testimonial the National Temperance League would for a certainty drop down on me as soon as they got to know. Well, all the time that town wasn't idle either. I had given it five years to crawl down to where I was waiting for it; instead of which it came galloping up in three. I was ready for it; I put another two stories and a veranda to my shanty, gave it a new coat of paint, and called it an hotel. All over my spare ground the swell villas were springing up like mushrooms after the rain. And the freehold I bought for a song, well, I wouldn't sell it for a whole opera. That's all; I've shown you my bag of tricks. Very simple, isn't it, Phil?"

"As simple as the egg of Columbus," said Phil gravely. "Didn't it ever strike you that you were doing wonderful things?"

Leuw laughed. "I never found time for patting myself on the back. What about you, though?"

"What about me?" echoed Phil with suppressed vehemence. "I have crammed a few books into my head, carried off a money-prize or two, which, perhaps, some other poor beggar needed much more badly than I did. . . ."

"No, no, Phil," said Leuw, holding up a protesting hand, "you won't get me on to that tack again. We happened to light on the subject eight years ago, if you remember, and you did not discuss it with the philosophic calm I expected of you. Let's talk of something else. What's your idea in taking up your quarters down here? Mother told me she couldn't quite see it. You went in for holding classes—in fact, I caught you at it myself just now—buying clothes and things for odd urchins, sending sick people down to the seaside all on the quiet, and playing my Lord Bountiful generally. Pastime, I suppose, eh?"

A drawn look came about Phil's lips at the concluding question.

"Is that how it strikes you?" he said, shooting a swift glance at his brother.

"I did not say it struck me one way or the other," replied Leuw, his tone bearing out, apparently, the neutrality of his thought. By comparison with it Phil's sounded quivering.

"Yes, Leuw, I have made it my pastime—in the same spirit that you set up your mineral water factory to prevent yourself from getting bored. Doesn't it seem to you an amusement one could take very seriously?"

"I don't see how it could be taken otherwise," said Leuw.

"But the fact remains," went on Phil almost sul-

lenly, "that, considered as work or play, you can't quite understand how the thing should ever take anybody's fancy—eh?"

"How do you make that out?" asked Leuw sharply.

"Only by the manner in which you talked of it. I have half an idea that instead of my 'Lord Bountiful,' it was on the tip of your tongue to say 'Don Quixote.'"

Leuw smiled strangely. "I must not blame you, Phil," he then replied gravely. "I admit, I always have been a bit of a mystery-monger, and I could not expect that our eight years' separation should have taught you to understand me better. What you took for indifference on my part was only my way of expressing astonishment."

"Astonishment at what, Leuw?"

"At you—at your coming to meet me half-way, when I had made up my mind for a troublesome journey before I would get to you."

"I am trying to catch your drift, but —" And Phil shook his head helplessly.

"One moment, please, Phil. What else was I to expect? I knew you were having a brilliant career. You were making a name for yourself. Everybody was looking on you as a 'most promising' young man. And, between ourselves, our people are, perhaps, a little inclined to hero-worship. I fancied you to myself—in my gloomier moods, I confess—the darling of the Maida Vale drawing-rooms, flattered and molly-coddled, making the most of your social opportunities, and growing a head the size of a pumpkin. And what is the truth? I find you here, in the

thick of the mud and the misery, pushing away from you all that puts the glitter on life to a man of your age, and taking on yourself the duty which most people—God forbid I should say all—are only too pleased to pass on to their neighbor.”

“And is that what you meant by my coming to meet you half-way?” asked Phil breathlessly.

“Yes, Phil, because I was not going to start without you—I was decided on that. And now it’s I who have to beg to be allowed to accompany you.”

“When did you first think of it?” came softly from Phil.

“I don’t remember the time when I did not think of it. I had made it my aim long before I could reasonably hope ever to carry it into effect.”

“And now that the possibility has come to you, all the more wonder that the desire should have remained. Look at all you have done and won; look at the thousand and one inducements to distract you from your purpose. . . .”

“Now you are turning the tables on me, Phil. For heaven’s sake, don’t let us begin by developing into a mutual admiration society. But your last point deserves answering. I never allowed myself to sink to the status of a money-grubbing machine—I wasn’t so foolish as that. I took good care to keep human; because one day I wished to enjoy what I had toiled for, and machines can’t do that. And it’s wonderful, Phil, what an edge it puts on a man’s feelings to be much alone. Many and many a time, as I sat all by myself, looking out on to the veldt, and listened to the night throbbing around me—don’t laugh, I know it sounds frightfully poetical—I thought to myself:

'Leuw, that is the heart of your people beating.' I never knew how near they were to me till I had put the distance of a few thousand miles between us."

There was a silence, which neither seemed inclined to break. At length Phil spoke.

"I felt the same, Leuw. Certainly, geographically speaking, I never was as far away from them as you—a great part of the time not more than an easy after-dinner stroll. But then there was the danger, nevertheless, of my drifting so far away from them that not even you would have been strong enough to draw me back again. I never saw that danger myself, I must admit, till you pointed it out to me just now."

"Not very tactfully, I am afraid. But you must make allowances. Out there where I was scales are used more for weighing gold than for weighing words."

Phil looked at him affectionately. "If this is no time for compliments, it is much less a time for reproaches," he continued. "I don't **think** that anything we have said could pass for one or the other. I certainly do not take any credit to myself for what I have done, because I hardly could have done otherwise, had the temptations been twice as great. I cannot even claim it was a conscious action on my part; it was simply an instinct that would take no denial. These people, speaking to me in the voice any man will give ear to before all others, the voice of his youth, these people called, and I followed."

"Anybody would think we were justifying ourselves," broke in Leuw.

"No, not justifying ourselves, but defining our position. There are hundreds, thousands of us who, as

the cant phrase has it, have risen superior to their surroundings. They have emerged from the teeming, struggling depths of their kindred in race, flattering themselves they did so by their own native mother-wit, and sublimely ignorant that the capital they started with was their portion of the national inheritance, which our people had accumulated during the years wherein their oppressors thought they were beggaring them irretrievably in hope and health and the will to live. And thus few, very few, have returned to give tithe or toll of their success where it was due."

"Go on, Phil; the clearer we see the situation the better."

"Leuw, there is nothing that makes me more hopeful of the issue than that we two, so different in bent and disposition, should have met on this as common ground. You and I represent—let us say it without a false sense of modesty—the two main characteristics, the two broad subdivisions, in which the vitality, the stamina of our people admittedly manifests itself; you the material, the commercial, to speak accurately—I the intellectual. It is the systematic and heart-whole co-operation of these two which is the first great requisite, if we are to react with any effect at all on the subject of our experiment. Excuse the coldly scientific phraseology. The man of business will be asked to contribute the sinews of war and—a matter of equal importance—his knowledge of practical affairs. On the student will devolve the task of employing his delicate touch—may I say his moral finesse and subtlety?—in probing the somewhat difficult and self-contradictory organism into which the force of circumstances has turned the modern Jew.

That the latter requires tender handling I suppose you are prepared to admit. The phases of his character are as numerous as the vicissitudes he has survived; and unless you take him at the proper psychological moment, it is possible that he will look on our approaches as the would-be cunning of a rather stupid enemy. This, then, is my province. I think we men of the study are more adept in applying the thermometer to his soul than you of the market-place."

"I am awfully glad," said Leuw seriously. "I was half afraid you would get on stilts, and go in for visionary vaporings and all that kind of thing. There is something very re-assuring in the prompt, cut-and-dried way in which you manage to put the case."

"I am only saying what I have written elsewhere," smiled Phil.

"Have you? Then why on earth don't you trot it out?"

"Oh, it's hardly worth while, Leuw—I have only just put down a few rough notes, which I didn't have the heart to elaborate. Still, if you want to listen—."

Phil reached out for a substantial copy-book, and found the place.

"The solution of the so-called Jewish question," he read, "must be sought for, separately and individually, in the countries which the respective contingents of our coreligionists have adopted for their habitat. That so few efforts have been made in this direction is a serious reproach to the leaders of Jewish thought and the men whose influence is of a more material nature. Of late they seem to have washed their hands entirely of the responsibility, owing to the propaganda for repatriation to the land of our fore-

fathers and the consequent resumption of a national or rather international activity, which has fired the imagination of the Jewish proletariat. That this dream is as yet within no measurable distance of realization, even the most perfervid of the self-appointed restorationists will have to admit; he will equally admit that any intermediate disciplining of our racial resources cannot but act beneficially on whatever may prove the eventual outcome of the movement. The claims of justification for this latter seem exaggerated—even with regard to the situation in Russia, where it is undoubtedly at its acutest."

"Even in Russia, Phil?" exclaimed Leuw. "Isn't that a rather bold thing to say?"

"Honestly, I can't say otherwise," replied Phil. "I own I may be drawing too sweeping inference from a somewhat cursory observation. But I cannot go against my impressions. The educational and topographical restrictions are, of course, sad and undeniable facts, the removal of which must be left to the almost irrepressible spread of political and religious tolerance. But the economic condition of the bulk of the Jewish population compares favorably with that of the orthodox peasantry."

"Yes, and what about the petty tyranny of which we hear so much?" interposed Leuw.

"I don't know. What I noticed at the frontier stations, not in one instance but in several, was this: the 'mujik' hawker, on his way to the neighboring German market-towns, handed his passport in at the gendarmerie, cap in hand, positively squirming with humility; his Jewish *confrère* strolled by unchallenged, with a nod of careless recognition to the sergeant on duty. Doesn't that seem to you significant?"

"It certainly seems contrary to accepted notions," agreed Leuw, with half a smile. "But let us keep to the point; how do you go on?"

"The main difficulty which has to be contended against is the strong centripetal tendency of the Jewish laboring classes, even in the countries where no limitations of domicile exist. The Ghetto days survive in the Ghetto ways; the walls, which were at once their prison and their barricade, have fallen, but they do not yet know what to do with their liberty; they have still to be taught that this huddling together, like sheep in a storm, is happily—with scarcely any qualification—an anachronism. And that a most lamentable one. This congestion has bred a sort of economic cannibalism, which devours, without digesting, the best energies of the workers; it has perpetuated a monopoly—one might almost call it a monotony—of trades, with well-nigh internecine results."

The words stirred a vague chord of memory in Leuw's brain. Where had he heard them before? He remembered. He had thought these things himself, he had written them down on his heart in letters of fire, the day he first had gone out to grapple with the world; and because he had grown so familiar with them, it came to him with the force of a revelation to hear them uttered by other lips.

"The chief desideratum, then," continued Phil, "is a gradual, but unintermittent process of decentralization. The Jewish workingmen must be drafted into other occupations, other places of abode. The dispersion will be the more difficult, because it would appear to necessitate, to some extent, the infringement of certain of the most time-honored Pentateuchal ordinances . . ."

"Yes, Phil, that is a point we must make sure of," said Leuw seriously. "The Sabbath, the Dietary Laws, are matters which we cannot dispose of by compromise. It would be a shockingly prodigal thing if, after having made our history a long chronicle of martyrdom for their sake chiefly, we should now let them go to the wall. It would almost jeopardize our reputation for thrift," he added smilingly.

"But we shall not let them go to the wall," was Phil's deliberate reply. "What concerns the Dietary Laws, adherence to them requires at the worst nothing more than a self-denial in certain articles of food, which are not a *sine quâ non* of physical well-being. I am not preaching what I would leave for others to practice; all during my stay at Cambridge I was a vegetarian. Of course, the seventh day question is a greater obstacle, but by no means an insurmountable one. There are a number of occupations wherein the Jewish operative could, in exchange for his Saturday off, relieve his Christian colleague of work the latter is compelled to do on the Sunday. An opening for this would present itself in farm-labor, especially at those periods of the year when the soil requires uninterrupted attention. Another vast province would be found—remember I am just speaking off-hand—in iron works, such as rolling mills, where, but for rare intervals, the machinery has to be kept going day and night, week in and week out; and again, in the provision of electric and hydraulic power, which are necessities every day of the year. Then comes employment on railways, omnibuses, and other means of traffic and communication; also superintendence in public buildings—libraries, museums, picture-galleries."

"Yes, the 'exchange' system ought to work well," said Leuw.

"As you pointed out, Leuw," continued Phil, "in the case of these two staple ordinances of our creed we cannot make a compromise; but that need not prevent our making allowances. To adopt an attitude rigorously Calvinistic would only end by begetting a spirit of faction, which, as it were, would drive wedges into the compactest of our communal interests. Surely, it is not too much to expect that our thorough-going, practical philanthropy should find its counterpart in a little doctrinal charity. Let us give the weaklings amongst us the benefit of the doubt; say they succumbed, not to the promptings of their personal convenience, but to the irresistible pressure of circumstances. Let us believe that each one of them would be a conforming Jew if he could. We have even no right to grudge the loss of those who have fallen away entirely; they are the ransom we must pay to the world for our emancipation. But those who seem to be halting midway, we must, without any reservation whatever, recognize for our own. It is true, as you contend, that it would be a sad waste of valuable effort, were we to resign the outward observances of our faith after undergoing so many ordeals for them; but conversely, these same ordeals must be considered equally futile, if they have not ingrained in us a Judaism which breathes and palpitates without drawing its life from even the most vitalizing externals."

"Well?" asked Leuw expectantly.

"I have finished," replied Phil. "All I have done was to clear the ground for you. I mean," he explained with an apologetic laugh, "as you are going to pay the piper, I must dance to your tune."

"I am willing and able to help," rejoined Leuw soberly; "but beyond that I can say very little. You have been on the spot; you must know the necessities of the case much better than I do. You have looked back, you have looked round; you surely must have looked ahead. Tell me what is to be done. Perhaps I shall come in afterwards with a suggestion or two of my own."

"Leuw, I feel honored by your commission," said Phil with suppressed eagerness. "Yes, I have looked ahead—almost till my gaze lost itself in the distance. But for all that I kept my immediate object well in view. Still, as your notice is so short, you must for the present be satisfied with a mere outline."

Leuw signaled him to proceed.

"The element on which we should concentrate our operations," continued Phil briskly, "would be the younger growth of the East End Jewry—there where every step of ours would be on well-explored ground. The older generation we should leave out of the question; working backwards is always a thankless task, and in this case an almost impossible one. The most that can be done for them is to influence their conditions of life by beneficial measures of local application, the duty of which devolves on the institutions already existing for this specific purpose."

Leuw nodded assent. "Yes, I think they must be left to their fate," he said half to himself.

"Very well, then," resumed Phil; "let us go step by step. Our only chance of effecting this much-needed decentralization lies with the young. What happens with the average East End lad of Jewish parentage after he leaves school? His father—a tailor

or a bootmaker in ninety cases out of a hundred—either takes him into his own workshop, or apprentices him elsewhere to one of these trades with their numerous subdivisions. He is not to be blamed; what should he do? He would gladly save his child from the life of drudgery, from the hand-to-mouth existence which has been his own lot. But his outlook on the world is so circumscribed, and there is nobody to advise him. And so the lad grows up, marries, raises a family, and adds his quota to the congestion, or at least keeps it constant. And then he repeats his own history in that of his children.”

“Very true,” commented Leuw. “Well?”

“Leuw, we must stop that boy, and as many more of him as it is possible, from getting swallowed up by the sweating-den. When he leaves his elementary school, there must be waiting for him a more advanced school, some sort of training establishment where he can prepare himself for some one of the occupations enumerated above. Of course, we should have to adopt a careful system of differentiation. The boys are not equally gifted, and their spheres must naturally be in accordance with their bent and capacity. But there can be no doubt that they would benefit, each in his degree. Take a lad whose intelligence does not fit him for anything higher than a ’bus-driver. Will he not be better off with forty shillings a week all the year round than with two pounds weekly for only six months out of the year and a very good chance of consumption thrown in for perquisite? We know, of course, that ’bus-drivers must start as stable-boys. That and all kindred considerations we must leave to a Location Bureau, which may, or

may not, form an annex of our scheme. But we may safely base our calculations on the fact that the large majority of the boys with whom we shall be dealing will be of the mental status required by the higher grades of manual occupations. This is fortunate, because it considerably widens their scope of eventual employment. It is quite true that we Jews as a race have never taken kindly to callings involving the applied sciences. This is one of the things which discount the feasibility of the colonization of Palestine. But as far as the purpose in hand is concerned, that need not alarm us. We are never slow to rid ourselves of any characteristic deficiency, so long as a tolerable remedy is offered us. We should begin the course of remedy under the most favorable auspices—in a country where the genius for mechanical science is one of the most prominent of the national attributes. But we should never get any appreciable results without definitely organized action—organized action as embodied in this proposed foundation of ours. Well, Leuw, do you think it worth the founding?"

A troubled look came into Leuw's eyes. "I understand what you mean," he said slowly—"a training institute, chiefly of a technical nature, and intended exclusively for our young coreligionists. But should we really be supplying a want by making it essentially Jewish?"

"I can see you, too, are frightened at the denominational boggy," said Phil, smiling confidently. "But I think I shall be able to re-assure you. I myself am strongly antagonistic to any uncalled-for separatism; in fact, it was due to my opposition that an attempt at the erection of a Jewish hospital fell through. But

this Institute of ours must be sectarian, or not at all. I know, of course, that there are non-denominational institutions fulfilling this same purpose. Then, why do Jewish parents avail themselves of these so sparingly? Partly because they are ignorant of their true purport, but more largely because they are vaguely afraid of subjecting their children to strange influences. By placing our Institute on a strictly Jewish basis, I am certain we could get them to appreciate more vividly the advantages of launching their children on new careers, and, in the second instance, make them more willing to endure the sacrifices entailed on them by deferring the wage-earning of their children for some years. But, Leuw, I have a much stronger argument; the necessity for giving it a denominational character depends on far loftier motives. Once more—what are our premises? The pressure on the Jewish area. We propose to relieve it by the removal of those fitted for pursuits outside the East End routine. We are going to make them enter on new surroundings, new interests, and a mode of life contrary to all their past experiences. Then comes the question whether the precepts of their faith, the fundamental principles inculcated on their childhood, will be proof against the on-rush of strange and powerful impressions. Once they get swept off their feet, God knows how far they may drift.

"One moment, Phil," broke in Leuw. "You seem to be contradicting yourself somewhat. Didn't you say the Jew's history should have made his religion an instinct with him?"

"It should, and let us hope it has," retorted Phil; "but in this instance we must leave nothing to acci-

dent. Remember what is at stake. We are taking the very pick of the young generation—for precedence of admission would be given to those who excel both in mental and physical respects—and propose to put their allegiance to a very severe test. Should they fail, the loss to us would be considerable. That is why we must endeavor manfully to imbue their minds, at the time when they are beginning to ripen into understanding, and yet retain all the plasticity of youth, with the ineradicable sense of our memorable past and God-ordained future. And to do that, we must hold them under our immediate control. But there would be a yet more positive result. These young men will go forth into the outer, larger world as specimen samples of their brothers-in-faith. It will depend much on the ethical training we have given them whether or not they will do something towards eliminating false prejudices and unjust preconceptions from the hearts of those who know us only from surface observation or hearsay. To contend that the three years they will pass in a sectarian atmosphere will impair their public spirit, their sense of duty to our great country, is nothing but a gratuitous slander. For one thing, the fostering of these will form as important a feature in the curriculum as the more obvious subjects. And it has yet to be proved that a man's loyalty to his religion disqualifies him for a patriot."

Leuw was about to speak, but on second thoughts allowed Phil to proceed unchecked.

"It would be premature to go into the inner details of the scheme. But this much, Leuw, we must make up our minds on: there can be no half-heartedness

about it. It must be thorough. Tuition must be given during the regular day hours, when the lads are in possession of their undiscounted energies. Don't let us bungle the thing by holding perfunctory evening classes, where they would drop in casually, worn out with a long day spent at their apprentice work, to tinker away in the laboratories for an hour or so, just to fill up the gap between then and bedtime. They must be alive to the sense of discipline both for mind and body—we shall have much to do to remedy our culpable neglect of physique. Whether attendance should be entirely free or not, we must leave for later consideration. But we should not be far wrong in laying down as a law that, wherever exceptional ability should be discovered, it will be helped on to what may be called the commissioned ranks of the professions."

Leuw got up from his chair, and silently paced the room for a moment or two. Then he turned resolutely to his brother.

"All right, Phil, you shall have your Institute," he said.

"My Institute? Why not ours?" queried Phil.

"Well, then, ours. I only wished to signify that the credit of the initiative belongs to you. You ask for time to elaborate the details of the Scheme; I must also ask for time to consider the scale on which it is to be launched. But, meantime, you have been guilty of a curious omission. Your list of possible new occupations makes no mention of service in the army and navy."

"Yes, a grave omission," conceded Phil readily.

Leuw acknowledged the avowal by a look, and con-

tinued: "I know from statistics that the number of Jews serving in the land forces, at any rate, is quite in proportion to the number of Jews residing in this country. Still, I want it to be much more than that, and should make preliminary training for both services one of the more prominent traits of our Institute. Do you remember"—Leuw's voice became a little husky—"do you remember old Christopher Donaldson?"

"Most certainly I do," said Phil, almost reproachfully.

"The night before he died, Phil, he told me we Jews ought to have a standing army, of men of our faith, ready to send wherever any of our coreligionists were being ill-used. Of course, his mind was wandering; but, nevertheless, there was a great moral in his words, and my desire to justify their spirit is growing stronger day by day. It is only by taking on ourselves the national burdens of Empire to a greater extent than can reasonably be demanded of us that we should requite our obligations to the mother-land, which says she has no step-children. For that we must give good measure, pressed down and running over. Fortunately, we shall not have to begin at the very beginning; already this duty has come home to most of us. I have heard of the movement for Jewish Boys' Brigades recently set on foot, and grasp its splendid possibilities."

"Then you will be glad to hear that it is meeting with wide recognition," said Phil. "For instance, two months ago, I understand, its funds received a welcome contribution 'in memory of somebody or other'; it was anonymous and I forget the exact amount."

"Only two hundred pounds," said Leuw.

"So it was you . . . ?"

"I told you the story of Sol Myers, the Jewish soldier who was killed at Inkerman while saving Christopher from certain death. I had long been on the look-out for an opportunity of fittingly honoring his memory."

"We shall honor it yet more by making his story serve as text and sermon to the young hearts with whom our task lies," said Phil quietly. "Leuw, unless I am much mistaken, we have done good work to-night. It would be presumptuous to attempt a guarantee even to ourselves, much more to others, whose sympathies with us are as yet precarious. We must make up our minds to disheartenings, misunderstandings, disappointments. But as long as we shall not fail each other, we can look to the main issue with confidence."

"Fail each other?" echoed Leuw. "Surely there is no need to bring that into question."

"God bless you for that. Are you going?" asked Phil, as he saw Leuw take up his hat.

"Yes; I promised mother not to be late. But you're coming along, aren't you?"

"No, thanks, Leuw, not to-night. I shan't be fit for any decent company till I have set up the preparatory draft of our Scheme to see what it looks like, at least on paper. I expect to have it ready for you by to-morrow morning, and shall bring it down."

"I shall be waiting for you, Phil. So long, then."

Phil saw him to the door. After a cordial grip of hands, by which, more plainly than by words, the one assured the other of his implicit trust and understand-

ing, Leuw was about to go off, when a sudden after-thought seemed to turn him back.

"By the way, what has become of that dark little girl—Effie, I think her name was," he said, with a casual air.

"Oh, she has grown up," returned Phil rather curtly.

"And—and Dulcie?" asked Leuw still more casually.

"She is what she promised to be—a woman among thousands, one of those whom any man must consider it a privilege to know; I," went on Phil, his tone ringing and animated, "I am tremendously proud of her. But you must find out for yourself. Of course, you intend to call on the Duveens soon?"

"Yes, certainly; I haven't left all my manners in South Africa," said Leuw with a jocularly which sounded hollow.

And then he went, carrying away with him an idea, which seemed correct, if only because it was so instantaneous. He contrasted Phil's glowing estimate of Dulcie with his grudging reference to Effie; and many a man who has had more time to bestow on the intricacies of psychological analysis than Leuw Lipcott, would have jumped to an equally false conclusion.

CHAPTER XXIII

DESPITE the intention Leuw had expressed of making an early call on the Duveens, a whole week had gone by, and he had not yet put it into effect. Phil did not press him, partly because he was himself too much engrossed in elaborating the details of their Scheme in accordance with the provisional indications of its extent Leuw had given him, and partly because he relied on Leuw's fixing his own time, as soon as the pressure of work incidental to the establishing of his London offices had relaxed. Perhaps, too, Phil conjectured, he required a little grace for acclimatizing himself once more to the conditions of European life, with which his long sojourn abroad might naturally have brought him somewhat out of touch. It was the latter consideration which prompted Phil to suggest a compromise.

"If you are not busy to-night, I could save you the trouble of a formal visit to Aunt's," he said to Leuw, on the morning of the eighth day after the latter's home-coming.

"Oh,—how?" asked Leuw, his tone in no wise protesting against Phil's insinuation that the visit might contain no particular attraction for him.

"Because Aunt and the girls are coming down this way to-night. We are having the first Happy Evening of the season for the children of the Kettles' Street Board School, where Dulcie and I are managers. It might interest you."

"Of course, it would," replied Leuw readily.

"And after that they are coming on with me to the Molesworth Working Men's Institute; I am down to open the debate there to-night."

"Then I shall make your invitation extend to that as well," said Leuw. "You don't expect I should miss such an opportunity of finding out at first hand what you can do?"

"If anybody had told me a month ago that I should have you among my audience to-night—" began Phil. "But never mind; you will have more chances than you will have time or inclination for to admire my 'gift of the gab,'" he added more lightly. "I shall expect you at Rupert Street—half-past six."

Leuw went about his City work that day with a strange restlessness, which reminded him forcibly of his state of mind on another day, now more than eight years ago and yet so tangibly near, when he had paid his first, and so far also his last visit, to the house in St. John's Wood. More than once he was on the point of getting thoroughly angry with himself. It mortified him to think that the man's hold on himself was no stronger than the boy's had been. And what was his justification for all this ferment of mind? The immediate prospect of meeting once more the girl—of course, she was a woman now—who during his hobbledehoy period, he fancied then, had upset his emotional equilibrium. True, no woman had succeeded in doing that since, or had even beguiled him into the fancy that she had succeeded; but what did that count? Surely he had disciplined himself firmly enough into the resolve that no stranger should become necessary to his self-content—so firmly that it

had required the necessity of setting his affairs on a finally stable footing to bring him back again into the reach of probably the only woman who might jeopardize that resolve. And then his temptation for self-anger grew stronger for his not daring to own to himself the truth. The necessity, which, as he had just alleged, had brought him back, was not so much a primary motive as an eagerly-seized excuse. It gave him at last the long-desired plea for putting his fate to the hazard, which his self-consciousness—his self-distrust he should rather call it—had so far denied him. This woman, who at best should only have been a mere memory with him, had been as vivid and important an item in the economy of his life as the principal events on which his fortunes had hinged. He knew her as intimately. She had grown up beneath his very eyes, as it were, in the letters she had written him, according to her promise, at rare though regular intervals. He had noted the frank impulsiveness of her teens change to the serene sedateness betokening a sense of more instant womanhood. Her irrelevant, girlish prattle on everything and nothing had by degrees divested itself of its more personal tone, and had become limited to references of merely general import. He still remembered the shock it had given him the first time he had seen the formal “Dear Mr. Lipcott” take the place of the customary “Dear Leuw” in the apostrophe of her letters, and that without any further allusion to the innovation. Nor had he been bold enough to challenge the change, but had tacitly acknowledged his perception of its appropriateness by substituting, in his turn, “Dear Miss Duveen” in his next reply to her. And yet

he could not say that her words breathed a spirit of chilling distantness. The almost exultant pride wherewith she touched on Phil's achievements was surely not a feeling she would have manifested to one whom she wished to consider as outside her immediate radius; indeed, it even seemed to hint her satisfaction at their possession of a common interest. During the last few days Leuw had come to regard this satisfaction in a new and, as he thought, more proper light. And that being so, why this absurd flurry, this focussed expectancy? He made an involuntary halt outside a post-office, with a shadowy idea of wiring to Phil some excuse for not keeping his appointment for the evening. After all, it was safe to keep on the right side of things. . . . And then he hurried on, smothering an exclamation of disgust. He was acting like a child which has happened to say "boo" to itself, and then runs away from an imaginary danger.

"You are punctual," said Phil, as Leuw entered the rooms at Rupert Street.

"One of my redeeming faults," smiled Leuw. "What are you doing there? Still at the Scheme?"

"I was just glancing through my draft again."

"It's a great shame that I leave all the work on your shoulders," said Leuw.

"I only wish it were twice as heavy, Leuw. What makes me wonder is that you should be content to leave it all to me. You always were so keen set on doing things for yourself in the old days. Has the leopard changed his spots?"

"No, but a wise man knows a wiser when he meets him. I should only hamper you by interfering at present. My time will come too."

"Will it come soon?" asked Phil, with obvious anxiety.

"I am quite as impatient for it as you are," replied Leuw.

"It was wrong of me to ask, seeing that I had your assurance already," said Phil apologetically.

"Nonsense, Phil; you don't think I am suffering from lung complaint that I must husband my breath?"

Phil laughed, and proceeded to put on his overcoat.

"We must be off at once, we are late already," he cut short the discussion. "Luckily we haven't far to go."

A walk of five minutes brought them to the school.

"They are here," said Phil; "I can see the carriage waiting at the other end of the street. This way, Leuw."

Leuw strained his eyes before entering to catch a glimpse of the thing which to his boyish fancy had stood for everything that was great and desirable on this earth. There was something provocative in the act, as though he were eager to obtain a standard of comparison between his past and present impressions. But he was foiled; just at that moment the carriage crawled round the corner. Leuw laughed to himself, as though somebody had played him an unsuccessful practical joke. Where the joke came in, he could not exactly say; but he felt vaguely grateful at having contrived enough equanimity at the prospect of meeting Dulcie as to indulge in even an apology of a laugh. Swiftly he followed Phil into the hall at the bottom of the corridor.

"Just wait here a moment," said Phil as they got into the doorway.

Leuw was nothing loath. Dazed and deafened, he tried to take in the screaming, scrambling hurly-burly of about two hundred youngsters, in knickerbocker or petticoat, making merry in real good *carte-blanche* fashion. The area at the disposal of the frolickers was somewhat limited, but they seemed endowed with a marvelous knack for making every one inch of ground go the length of a yard. Half amused, half solicitous, Leuw watched Phil's laborious progress through the turmoil, each one of his steps threatening havoc and overthrow to the blindly cannoning little ones. So it seemed quite a long time before Phil managed to gain the other extremity of the hall, where a tallish young lady, standing with her back to him, was busily turning one end of a skipping-rope. Leuw more than guessed who she was, and it was with a strained sort of curiosity that he noted the effect of Phil's message upon her. The sharp turn of her head in his direction ought to have gratified him. And presently she was making towards him, steering her course cleanly and surely through the living labyrinth, which seemed specially intended to give a clearer setting to her dexterous yet dignified grace. The next instant she was standing before him, holding out her hand and smiling at him frankly as she said:

"It is very good of you to come here, Mr. Lipcott. I hope you are going to make yourself useful to-night."

"I'm afraid I don't know how to—this isn't much in my line," replied Leuw, smiling back at her tremulously.

"Never mind, you will soon pick it up; and if you are not too proud to be taught, I shall give you a hint

or two. "Come over to my 'beat'—we mustn't get in the way of the other helpers. Don't be frightened—the kiddies don't mind a little tumble; it's all in the fun," she laughed, as she saw him take a hesitating step forward. "Mother is upstairs in the workroom, and Effie—you remember her, don't you?—is at the piano. She started dutifully with the barrel-organ tunes, and then, as usual, lost her way into Beethoven. Fancy playing the 'Kreutzer Sonata' to little mites of ten. Fortunately nobody can hear her."

Leuw kept close in her wake to take advantage of the thoroughfare she, as it were, carved out for him. He knew very little about the "Kreutzer Sonata," and so could not judge of its absurdity as a musical entertainment for children. What he could judge of, and that very accurately, was the pleasure the manner of her welcome had given him. It was so honestly spontaneous and unpremeditated; it held no suggestion of loose, very loose, ends of acquaintanceship having to be picked up and knotted together again. Indeed, anybody not cognizant of the true state of things might have imagined that, after parting overnight, they had met here by appointment. But it was not so much her lack of surprise at seeing him that pleased him; no doubt Phil had informed her of his return; it was the absence of any sign of curious scrutiny, which under the circumstances might have been forgiven in the best of good breeding. He also had scarcely given her a critical glance; he felt it was quite unnecessary. Perhaps he, too, had become as familiar to her, inwardly and outwardly, through his letters as she to him. And then his brows contracted darkly. Since when had he taken to flattering him-

self so egregiously? He knew what he knew, or guessed, and yet . . .

"How can you get yourself into a brown study amid this din?" laughed Dulcie at his elbow.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," he stammered in confusion, "I—I—what is it you want, my dear?"

He bent down to the round-faced little girl, blanketed in a huge, white pinafore, who was lisping up at him:

"Pleathe, mithter man, thir, you take one end the rope, and pleathe, lady, you the other. I like thkiping with two tall peopleth turnin'."

And thrusting the rope-end without more ado into Leuw's hand, she stood ready for action.

"I am afraid there is nothing to be done but to humor this very positive young person," said Dulcie as soon as her amusement permitted her to speak.

"I think so, too," agreed Leuw with a rather rueful smile.

He began with a stiff awkwardness which did not suit the positive young person at all, and her shrill directions for increase of speed compelled him to apply himself to the business more seriously.

"Why, Mr. Lipcott, you are becoming quite an expert," Dulcie rallied him.

"One might as soon do a thing well if one does it at all," replied Leuw with labored cheerfulness.

"Ninety-seven, ninety-eight, ninety-nine—hundred," yelled the positive young person, as she collapsed, panting triumphantly: "Never got up to a hundred before."

"Did you hear that, Mr. Lipcott?" said Dulcie, this time only half playfully. "You have got your reward

already. By doing your best you have enabled other people to do better. No, dearie, you mustn't run away without thanking the gentleman."

"Please, mithter man, thank you, and don't look tho worried," obeyed the positive young person as she turned to defend herself vigorously against certain detractors of her prowess, who had insinuated that she really had not "done the hundred," inasmuch as she had counted "fifty-nine—seventy."

Leuw had to pay the penalty of his success as a "turner," by being kept at his post until the time for the magic lantern show had arrived. Here again, under Dulcie's captaincy, he did yeoman's work in helping to get the children seated expeditiously. Phil had not been much in evidence; immediately after handing Leuw over to Dulcie, he had taken up his stand at the piano, where he listened to Effie with a rapt look that seemed intended to compensate her for the inattention of the others. It was kind and considerate of him, thought Leuw, though Effie, from the recollection he had of her, hardly appeared the sort of girl to take the heedlessness of her audience much to heart. Once or twice he had noticed Dulcie cast a fugitive glance at the pair, and each time something like a perplexed smile had stolen about the corners of her mouth. Shortly before the magic lantern began operations, Phil brought Effie up.

"If the mountain refuses to come to Mahomet—welcome back to England, Mr. Lipcott," she said pleasantly.

"You were at the piano, and I remembered you did not like to be interrupted," smiled Leuw in extenuation.

"Did you? What a pity you should have wasted your memory on such a trifle."

"Still I did not do so at the expense of anything else I should have remembered," replied Leuw, falling into her vein.

"Anything else? What, for instance?"

"Don't you answer her," broke in Dulcie: "if you humor Effie the least little bit, she will have you in the thick of a wrangle without your having the faintest notion how you committed yourself to it—ah! here comes mother."

Leuw found no difficulty in making his heart respond to the evident sincerity of Mrs. Duveen's greeting. His hand pressed hers again and again in gratitude for her words: "I am so glad—for your mother's sake." They reminded him how much this woman had done to help his mother to bear the burden of her loneliness.

The lantern slides were a great success, at least so Leuw opined from the shouts of delight wherewith the children punctuated their progress. Of the actual display he saw very little, because his attention was absorbed by a living picture in his more immediate neighborhood, to wit, Dulcie seated on a chair with a peaky-faced little hunchback on her lap. The pathetic trust with which the little fellow nestled against her seemed to set upon her a seal of loving reliability; his helplessness brought out in relief the splendid strength of her young womanhood. One had but to look at her to know that here was one whose soul was clamoring for high responsibilities—the higher, the more acceptable. Leuw's heart heaved almost into his mouth: it was many a day since he had seen so generous, so inspiring a sight.

The "Happy Evening" was over. It had ended up with the presentation of an orange and a penny cake to each of the children as they filed out. Leuw helped in the distribution by handing the oranges from the basket to Dulcie—a task in which he did not cover himself with glory. More than one of the oranges slipped through his grasp, and he had the humiliation of hearing the positive young person call him "butter-fingers" under her breath; but then the positive young person could not yet possibly know how easily sometimes the casual touch of a woman's hand will disorganize a whole man, though on all other occasions his gripping capacity may be that of an octopus.

The carriage had been asked to wait, because Mrs. Duveen was returning home by herself. She did not go on to the debate, as the somewhat delicate state of her chest precluded the idea of a two hours' stay in an atmosphere which was a blend of all the known varieties of shag-fumes emanating from clay pipes long deserving of superannuation.

The narrowness of the pavement, by giving it an air of necessity, took all appearance of design out of the way the young people paired off—Phil and Effie in front, Leuw and Dulcie behind.

"What do you think of our 'Happy Evenings,' Mr. Lipcott?" asked Dulcie, after Mrs. Duveen had waved her final good-by from the carriage.

"I believe they are very well in their way," replied Leuw.

"That is not a particularly liberal tribute," smiled Dulcie. "To my mind they are perhaps the most satisfactory of all our attempts at doing good. There

can be no mistake about the results; you are your own eye-witness of them."

"Yes, but results which are immediate, are, as a rule, small; at least that is a law in commerce, you may happen to know, Miss Duveen."

"Still, such things depend chiefly on the size of one's aspirations," said Dulcie pleasantly.

Lew stopped short for an instant: was she referring to the magnitude of his own Scheme? Then remembering that according to compact the Scheme was, for the present, to be a secret between himself and Phil, he continued:

"No, what I mean is only that there hardly seems much call for the effort. You might have achieved as much by leaving the children to spend the hour or two in their improvised playgrounds—the streets. That might at least foster their spirit of independence. Their amusement here gave me an impression of—the artificial."

"I am glad you had the grace to hesitate over the word," laughed Dulcie. "Surely what you meant to say was 'systematic.' More method in their play might be productive of more method in their work."

"Probably; then what becomes of the immediateness of your results?"

"I admit, Mr. Lipcott, you compel me to shift my ground. But I do not feel the least bit disconcerted. The loss is yours. You men who have been out and about in the world, and know on what a grand scale it is built, have lost the taste for the miniature. I am extremely sorry for you and your like. You must go about continually hitting your heads against the ceiling."

"Thank you for sympathizing with our bumps," bantered Leuw. "Of course—if that will relieve your anxiety—we get used to them after a time."

"So much the worse for you," returned Dulcie quite vehemently. "That means you have become hopelessly callous. When a man ceases to deal with the pettinesses, the negligible nothings of life, he has ceased to deal with life itself."

"Don't tell me that, Miss Duveen, or you will end by making me quite sorry for myself. And just at present I don't want to feel sorry—I want to feel glad."

"Glad? What of?"

"Of the opportunity to thank you for having occasionally remembered a poor exile."

"Oh, that was nothing," was the off-hand reply.

"You should not have said that," observed Leuw quickly.

"Why not?"

"Because you are cutting the ground from under your own attitude by showing the two or more views which may be taken of everything. What you consider a mere nothing I consider a great deal."

"But I refuse to let you take this poor, unfortunate 'nothing' in the sense you do," laughed Dulcie. "Please construe it into an insufficient cause for your gratitude. I liked writing to you, because it gave me an opportunity of putting things down black on white, and enabled me to get a clearer conception of them, which otherwise I should have gone without. So you see the burden of obligation rests heavily on me."

"I am glad to have been of service to you," replied Leuw, with a dim sort of anger at her words. And

yet, to do her justice, what other way could he expect her to put it?

"Of course, you are going to tell me something of your impressions and experiences," she went on briskly.

Leuw promised readily, though with a keen sense of the hypocrisy of his promise. What had he to tell her in addition to the rather lengthy observations on country and people which had been the text of his letters to her? It struck him that she must be aware of this herself, and that her request was only a subterfuge for—for what? Meeting with—talking to him again? This time he did not even rebuke himself for his sanguineness; it was too childish to be treated seriously.

Another minute or two brought them to the "Molesworth." Outside the club building lounged a group of laborers, most of them with their tool-bag slung across their shoulder. They drew back respectfully to allow Phil and his party to pass in; that, and a chorus of "good evenin', sir," showed that Phil was not unknown to them. He responded cheerily.

"We was waitin' to see if you'd turn up all right, sir, if not, we'd be straight off home," replied one of the men in answer to his question why they did not prefer the warmth inside.

The same manifestations of acquaintance and esteem greeted Phil as he stepped into the hall. It was a few minutes to eight, and he had just time for a handshake with the chairman for the evening—one of the more prominent members of the School Board for the metropolis.

"We can always count on a good 'house' when you are down to speak, Mr. Duveen," said the latter pleasantly.

And indeed, by the time Phil rose to his feet, the hall was quite full, and overflowed into the corridor. Nevertheless, when he had concluded his opening sentences, he had got his audience into the state of expectant restraint which puts a poor speaker into a flurry and a good one on his mettle. And Phil belonged to the latter category. The subject of debate was one of the important questions of social reform, which are always more or less agitating the proletarian mind. It needed but little examination of Phil's method of speaking to discover how he managed to obtain his hold over his somewhat difficult audience. He gauged their intelligence to a hairbreadth, it seemed; he kept closely within their educational compass, and yet skilfully avoided all appearance of mental condescension. His phrases were homely, colloquial, without having an air of being specially brought in to suit the occasion. And then there could be no doubt as to the lucidity of his thought, the logic of his deductions, the unerring aim with which he drove home his arguments. But above all, he appeared to possess the happy knack of appealing as man to man, of addressing himself to each one of his listeners individually and separately, and flattering him by making him feel the only one present on whom the full force and drift of the speaker was concentrated.

Such was the impression left on Leuw, who followed his brother spell-bound and breathless. He had come there fully prepared to guard against any natural and instinctive bias in favor of Phil; he would take

him on his own merits wholly and solely. But he now found that his precaution had been unnecessary. The man who spoke and carried him away headlong was not his brother Phil at all; it was some stranger, whose acquaintance he was making here for the first time. He thought of Phil as he had known him during the various phases of his career—as the timid little lad, ever ready to catch hold of his mother's apron strings, as the high-spirited, self-confident public school boy, as the young man, sobered and dignified by the coming prestige of his university course, and finally as the strong, fervid thinker, the calmly reasoning enthusiast, whom he had found on his recent return. And now he saw him under the most unfamiliar aspect of all—as the master mind swaying the moment, as the potential leader of men, giving token of his possibilities by the ease and effortlessness wherewith he converted the listening multitude into an instrument that quivered responsively to his touch.

At least one other person seemed to see him in that rôle. Dulcie and Effie had been accommodated with seats on the platform, while Leuw had expressed himself content with a place in the front row of the body of the hall. It was only afterwards that he realized what had prompted him thereto—the unconscious desire to give himself at last the luxury of a full and undisturbed view of Dulcie's face. So far he had only guessed at it; and it was certainly due to him that he should find out how near he had come to the truth. Not at all near, he had to admit as, toward the end of Phil's speech, he finally mustered up sufficient courage to glance at her. It was then that he became aware of the deep effect Phil must be producing; was

it not made clear to him by her half-parted lips, giving a peep of white-gleaming teeth, by the flush in her cheeks, by the proud look of hero-worship in her eyes? Leuw was glad to see her thus; now he had his impression of her in full. This picture of her was a fitting pendant to the one in which the little crippled boy figured; here she was the woman of great aims, noble aspirations, glorying to hear them nobly voiced. Phil was doing very well; he was building up his case impreguably; he was leaving no weak spot through which his opponent might break and wreak havoc in the phalanx of his facts. But, whether he knew it or not, his greatest achievement that evening were those half-parted lips, those roseate-flushed cheeks. And Leuw wondered how many acres of his freehold property he would give in charity, if that would mean his putting but a shadow of that look into her eyes. His gaze rested for a moment on Effie; the cold placidness of her mien almost stung him to anger. How dared she remain cold and indifferent, when the other one took no pains to prevent her very soul from shining out undisguised?

Phil was succeeded by the opposer of the motion, who was heard with a sort of polite tolerance. After that there were a few floundering attempts on the part of the audience to get up a discussion, and then Phil replied. He took the opposer's arguments, and to everybody's huge delight rent them limb from limb. He had reserved his peroration for the reply speech, and when he finished, he came in for a demonstration, the sincerity of which was manifest.

"God bless yer, sir," croaked a wizened old navvy as the tumult was subsiding. "You're the only one o' the swells what understands us."

And the crowd yelled corroboration.

The hall was emptying slowly. The people who had occupied the platform remained behind to avoid the crush. Phil was the centre of a small congratulatory throng. Leuw thought he chafed a little at being hemmed in, and stepped on to the platform with half an idea of coming to his relief. At that moment Phil emerged, to be met by Dulcie's intense: "Oh, Phil." Phil acknowledged it hastily though heartily, cast an affectionate nod at Leuw, and passed on to where Effie was standing a little way from the others. The member of the School Board was exchanging remarks with Dulcie, and so Leuw was left to his own resources, within ear-shot of his brother and Effie.

"Well?" asked Phil, with a curious eagerness in his voice.

Effie did not answer immediately. "I suppose you were successful; at least they all seemed to think so," she said finally.

"And you?" Phil's eagerness had changed to anxiety.

"Candidly, I did not. All the time you were speaking, it was like seeing you walk about in corduroys. I only want to hear you at your best, say at the 'Eighty Club,' or generally where you can rise to all your height, where you need not stoop to make yourself understood."

"And yet I want so much to please you at all times and in all places," replied Phil. His anxiety had now unmistakably veered round to pain.

"Thank you, Phil. But still when you ask me for my opinion, I must tell you what I think; or would you prefer me to pretend to you?"

"No, Effie, anything but that."

The extinguishing of the centre chandelier came as a strong reminder that the hall attendant wished to get home, and advised the laggards to follow his example.

"Will you see the girls home with me?" asked Phil, turning to Leuw.

"I shall be delighted," answered the latter, his words outstripping his thoughts.

When his thoughts came level with his words, he saw no reason why he should rue them. Whatever mischief the evening had done, he certainly would not minimize by taking himself off to his own company, with its unalluring prospects of ineffectual brooding. In any case the more he saw of Dulcie, the more it would help to confirm his policy—a policy of cool head and steady heart. "That will depend on circumstances," he had replied to Phil's enquiry as to the length of his stay in England. Those circumstances, of course, spelled Dulcie. His business training had taught him the value of surmises, but only in as far as they were used to pave the way to certainties. To stop at them was so unpractical a proceeding as to reflect discredit on an averagely intelligent office-boy. Well, he would stay for his certainty; and if it turned out as it might turn out . . . It was with a feeling of "any port in the storm" that he remembered that the steamers left Southampton once a week.

And meanwhile, harking back to the conversation between Phil and Effie, he wondered why a man should set such tremendous store on the praises of a woman of whom he never spoke except in monosyllables.

CHAPTER XXIV

"FIRST as usual," said Mr. Alexander, in his customary good-natured growl, as he entered the drawing-room at Mrs. Duveen's one evening, a week later; "if this goes on much longer, I shall begin to feel quite undistinguished."

"Then you should improve your manners, and not show yourself so ravenous for your dinner," jested Mrs. Duveen, who was there to receive him.

"Call me an ogre at once, and be done with it," suggested Uncle Bram flippantly. "Who, by the way, is coming to-night? Oh, I remember, that young man from Africa."

"I won't have you call him 'that young man from Africa,'" said Mrs. Duveen energetically; "it sounds like a parody on 'The Wild Man of Borneo.' And he is not wild by any means, I can assure you."

"I never said he was," protested Uncle Bram with equal vigor. "Indeed, my impression of him is that of a particularly sane and rational individual. I dare say he has got on, eh?"

"Yes, I understand he has done very well."

"H'm. I shall be glad to renew our acquaintance. Who else is coming?"

"Only Effie and her mother, Mrs. Lipcott, and, of course, Phil."

"Where's Dulcie?"

"In her room, dressing."

"Has she been at it long?"

"What an odd question to ask, Bram."

"Still, has she?"

"Oh, about half an hour."

"H'm, that's an improvement on the usual."

"What *do* you mean, Bram?"

"Only that my dear little niece is one of those rather aggravating young ladies whose chief pride in life is to get done before everyone else."

"Very proper, too; I should hate to think of her dawdling before the looking-glass."

"That's not the other alternative," replied Uncle Bram warmly. "But when one has a face and figure that are worth bestowing a little pains upon—the long and short of it is, Rose, she does not make the most of herself."

"And pray, what is the point of your valuable remarks?"

"What, Rose, you don't see? And you a woman and a mother?"

Mrs. Duveen almost fell back with a quick little gasp.

"There is your answer whether you are a woman," said Uncle Bram quite fiercely; "for years you go about in blissful indifference, and here I just breathe a word of warning, and you get into a downright panic. Why, what's lost? She is only twenty-three and, well, she is Dulcie."

"You mistake me, Bram," said Mrs. Duveen quickly; "the cause of my alarm is not what you think."

"Then please enlighten me."

"How should I feel if some one were to come between her and me?"

"If you will permit me to be a trifle brutal for once," said Mr. Alexander stiffly, "I shall beg to inform you that I should not consult your feelings in the matter at all. You may say that as a male spinster I have no right to dogmatize on it; I don't—at least not on the sentimental aspect. But I do on the practical, and that most strongly. At any rate, where my dogma leaves off, your duty should begin."

"Yes, yes, Bram," came from Mrs. Duveen almost imploringly, "you are perfectly right; but what am I to do?"

"H'm," said Uncle Bram, scratching his ear, "the worst about it is that there is no direct course of action possible. A machine-made arrangement is, in the case of a girl like Dulcie, out of the question. For the matter of that, it ought to be in the case of every other girl. Again, to point out to her the necessity of taking things into her own hands would make her barricade herself in her room forever. But there will be a change."

"How, Bram?"

"I am going to take her under my wing; you may smile, but I am desperate. She'll have to go in for going out—ahem! I'll make her follow me about to places, if I have to carry her there; and instead of politely yawning the evening through, she will have to take an intelligent interest in the fellows—decent fellows, too, some of them—who give their moustaches an extra twirl when she appears on the scene."

"At one time it seemed young Leon . . ." began Mrs. Duveen.

"Fiddlesticks—an optical illusion, like one or two others of them," interrupted Uncle Bram unceremo-

niously. "I can see what it is. She is modeling herself on that Effie of hers; there's another bright specimen for you. What has come over that girl I can't tell for the life of me. All day long it's Effie and piano, or for a change, piano and Effie—that's what it has been for the last year or two. And when it isn't dumps with her, it's devilry; she doesn't seem to know any happy medium. But the main point is Dulcie. It would simply be an outrage to society to let her remain single, seeing that she is cut out for a wife according to the latest improvements. I tell you, there's going to be a decided change."

"A change in what?" enquired Dulcie, as she stepped into the room at that moment, all soft and dainty in her clinging cream silk.

"In the weather, my dear," stammered Uncle Bram, taken aback; "the barometer has fallen heavily."

"So will you have a heavy fall, if you get into the habit of fibbing. Why, mother dear, you look quite upset; what has he been up to?"

"Nothing, child," said Mrs. Duveen, smiling at her solicitous vehemence. "He was mentioning something about—but never mind, dear, it wouldn't interest you."

"Now that you have convinced yourself that I have been making no attempt on the life of your precious mamma," drawled Uncle Bram with grim politeness, "may I ask whether you will honor me by accepting one of the two tickets I have purchased for the grand ball in aid of the Infant Schools? Under most distinguished patronage, you know; severely select."

"When is it?"

"Next Tuesday week," replied Uncle Bram, weirdly persuasive.

"Tuesday? Couldn't possibly."

Uncle Bram put on his apoplectic look. "Why not?"

"Girl's Club; needlework night," explained Dulcie, cheerfully laconic.

"Consider me to have delivered myself of a naughty word," said Uncle Bram. "Of course, you will put off the needlework."

"Uncle Bram," said Dulcie mock-impressively, "when shall I get you to learn that virtue is its own reward, or should be? You spend a couple of guineas in the cause of charity, and you at once think that gives you an excuse for an orgy of sinful dissipation. For shame! Consider your hair that was."

And she gave his bald pate an affectionate pat.

Uncle Bram submitted speechlessly to the indignity of word and action; then in an "I'll give you a last chance" sort of voice, he tried again:

"Then you won't come?"

Dulcie shook her head with smiling but decisive provokingness.

"There you are," said Uncle Bram as he turned accusingly to Mrs. Duveen, "always some excuse. Girls' Club, indeed, you little mischief"—Dulcie's face had suddenly appeared quite close to his own—"I'll take that Girls' Club and do something to it; I'll disband it—get all the girls married somehow—pay somebody to let a mouse loose amongst them. . . ."

"You dear old bully," cooed Dulcie with both her arms round him, "you are talking absolute rubbish, and you know it. Ah, here are Effie and her mother at last," she exclaimed, bounding away from him, as the house bell sounded.

"Or Phil," said Mrs. Duveen eagerly, as she followed her out into the hall.

Dulcie's guess was right. "I am going up to your room—I want to fix something," said Effie hurriedly to Dulcie; "come along."

Dulcie turned up the gas as soon as they got there.

"Don't do that," came querulously from Effie, who had flung herself on the couch, and was tilting the heel of one foot on the toes of the other.

"But you can't do it in the dark," remonstrated Dulcie, obeying.

"I don't want to do anything; I've got something to tell you."

"Oh, Effie, what can it be?"

Even in the half-light Effie's face showed almost hectic, and her fathomless eyes shone with more than their wonted lustre.

"Dulcie, I went to-day," she broke out defiantly.

"Went where?"

"To the agent."

"What, all by yourself?" breathed Dulcie.

"All by myself, and in broad daylight," replied Effie, more defiantly still.

"And you didn't tell your mother?"

"That's just like you," cried Effie angrily; "you keep on bothering me with stupid questions, instead of asking, as any sensible kind of person would, what the man said to me. And now I won't give you the chance of asking. He said—he is the biggest agent in the line, you know—he said that I had marvelous—yes, don't gape—marvelous talent, and he would not have the slightest difficulty in getting me a hearing on the best concert platforms in town as soon as the season starts. So there."

And she brushed the creases out of her frock with a hand that trembled visibly.

"Oh, Effie, dear," and Dulcie tried to stroke the trembling hand back into self-possession, "you know how I have always felt for your plans and ambitions, and how proud I shall be of you and all that, but. . . ."

"Yes, but?"

"But why did you not tell your mother first?"

"Because I did not even tell her afterwards. You are the only one who knows. Oh, Dulcie, I could not stand it any longer, the dull, dreary prospect of doing nothing, being nothing, when I felt all the time I could make my future full with facts, instead of making it empty by dreams. And only because poor papa was so foolish and improvident as to pile up a lot of money in his lifetime, which I now have to drag about with me, if I don't want it to drag me down. Haven't we poor rich people also the right to live?"

"And your mother won't give in?"

"Absolutely certain, and that's why she won't know till I send her a stall for my debut."

"Oh! Eff, you make me feel so wretched," moaned Dulcie.

"I don't care; if I am made to feel wretched, I don't see why somebody else should not feel wret. . . ."

With a little cry of horror Dulcie clapped her hand over the mutinous mouth.

"You didn't mean to say that, Effie," she gasped.

Effie seized the repressing hand, and almost bit it in her passionate repentance.

"Oh, no, no, no, Dulse, darling—of course I didn't mean it, but be good to me, only this once more. Help me to carry the secret if you don't want me to die just yet."

Dulcie reflected for an instant, then a joyous look came into her eyes.

"Effie, suppose we divide the secret into three? That will make it ever so much easier."

"Divide it into three? Who is to be the third?"

"Phil, of course."

Effie's lips pursed disdainfully. "I don't see the slightest necessity for Phil in the matter," she said harshly.

"Not for Phil?" exclaimed Dulcie.

"Will you kindly explain your surprise?" asked Effie icily.

"I thought you were such good friends," stammered Dulcie.

"Well, and what if we are? I suppose I can always reserve myself the right of fixing a limit to our friendship."

"I am afraid you have been quarreling," said Dulcie disconsolately.

"Oh, dear, no; you don't think such an extremely correct young man as Phil would give anybody a handle for quarreling?"

Dulcie sighed and was silent. This was not the first time that Effie had given vent to bursts of irritation against Phil in his absence; and yet, though Dulcie had carefully watched them together, she had never noticed Effie's attitude to him to be anything save a consistent, possibly a studied affability. To-day she felt more at a loss than ever; the figure on the couch there was not Effie at all; it was some wan, forlorn mystery that made her heart ache.

"For goodness sake come down," cried Effie, jumping up suddenly. "Don't let us sit mooning here like

a pair of owls. Everything will be all right—some day. But Dulcie. . . .”

“I won’t tell, not a word.”

“Oh, I thought we had settled that long ago. What I mean is, if anybody tries to worry me into eating anything to-night, I shall just take my things and go off home. And you have got to see to it.”

On descending they found Phil and Mrs. Lipcott already arrived.

“I have already apologized for Leuw,” said Phil, noting Dulcie’s look round the room. “He couldn’t get away in time for dinner, but he will turn up for certain later on in the evening.”

At Uncle Bram’s suggestion an immediate move was made to the dining-room.

Phil took no part in the table-talk—at least not in its earlier stages; he appeared to be reserving himself for some special occasion. A momentary lull gave it to him.

“If you all promise not to let it interfere with your appetite, I shall tell you the story of a little idea Leuw and I hit on between us,” he began. “We have kept it to ourselves so far, but now it struck us that we might as well get the opinion of the unprejudiced observer; not that we are going to take the slightest notice of him, but we can’t resist the temptation of cheaply gratifying our curiosity.”

Phil’s manner was half jesting; yet it did not escape his listeners that he was masking a more serious mood. And the attention which it bespoke for him certainly did not decrease as his account of the Scheme proceeded. Despite Phil’s injunction Uncle Bram laid down his knife and fork. Dulcie’s interest was unmis-

takable. Mrs. Duveen and Mrs. Lipcott looked at each other with a quiet smile, half surprise, half congratulation. Effie alone gave no indication of her thoughts; her eyes downcast, she toyed steadily with the little pile of bread crumbs before her.

"Oh, it's splendid, isn't it, Uncle Bram?" came impetuously from Dulcie, as Phil concluded.

"If you will kindly permit me to catch my breath a little, I may be able to answer you," said Uncle Bram, more cautiously. "Did anybody ever hear anything more audacious?"

Phil laughed. "I suppose I ought to be grateful for that, Uncle Bram; you might have said fool-hardy."

"He might have said courageous," broke in Mrs. Duveen softly.

Uncle Bram shook his head vigorously. "No; you won't get me to commit myself. The matter is too responsible for that."

"Don't put such a value on yourself," remonstrated Dulcie; "you heard Phil say before, he would not let outside criticism affect him."

"I know Phil better than that," replied Uncle Bram rather bluntly.

Phil was given no time to repudiate or admit the contention, owing to Leuw's arrival. Mrs. Duveen had left orders that he was to be shown in, even though dinner was still in progress.

"I am a little earlier than I thought I should be," he began.

"If you want to make excuses, make them for not being earlier still," said Mrs. Duveen as she shook hands with him.

"You came in the nick of time, Leuw," said Phil.

when Leuw had finally got seated. "Uncle Bram showed himself inclined to be a bit cantankerous about our little project."

"Indeed?" smiled Leuw.

"Yes, if by that you mean that I venture to reserve my judgment," replied Uncle Bram amiably.

And then the subject was, as it were, tacitly ruled out of order. Leuw's presence had put an air of constraint upon it; everyone seemed to have arrived at a new sense of its importance, with which the present desultory mode of discussion accorded but ill. And when, at the close of the meal, Mr. Alexander invited the two young men to the smoking-room, their ready response had about it a curious ring of momentousness.

This last followed them into their privacy, and showed itself by the "hedging" wherewith the talk was at first kept on neutral topics. It was not till he was half through his cigar that Mr. Alexander availed himself of one of Leuw's remarks to approach the Scheme.

"Do you know the feeling that came over me at seeing you once more, Mr. Lipcott?"

Leuw looked at him astonished.

"A sort of shamefacedness," continued the other.

"Surely the cause must have been purely imaginary," replied Leuw.

"You say so because you have forgotten. Do you remember the last time I saw you I suggested putting you under a pledge?"

"But you withdrew the suggestion almost in the same breath."

"Only because you insisted on trusting yourself. You nearly put me to the blush by the brilliant way in which you have justified your self-belief."



"THEN YOU APPROVE OF OUR SCHEME?" EXCLAIMED PHIL
EAGERLY.

"Then you approve of our Scheme?" exclaimed Phil eagerly.

"You show a suspicious deference to my humble opinion, considering the rather stiff-backed attitude I understand you propose to take up," smiled Mr. Alexander.

"By no means," rejoined Phil quickly. "Don't mistake me, Uncle Bram. You know what store I as a rule set on your personal opinion of men and affairs; but in the present instance, it is absolutely valueless. I do not want you to speak as Uncle Bram, but as the communal politician, as the representative of the influences which may be said to dominate the destiny of contemporary English Judaism."

"You only forestall me," said Mr. Alexander. "I was about to draw the same distinction myself. I agree fully that the natural prepossession with which, as an individual, I should view this attempt of yours, puts my personal estimate out of court at once. But I am glad to see that, whatever private resources, both mental and financial, you are prepared to invest in the founding of your Institute, you seem to recognize the fact that its main issue must depend ultimately on what general sympathy and co-operation you succeed in enlisting; and you want me to give you an official estimate, as it were, of your chances of that."

"Precisely," came from Phil, while Leuw contented himself with nodding his assent.

"Both of you must be aware, of course," continued Mr. Alexander thoughtfully, "that the question is one which has exercised our communal parliament—to develop your phrase, Phil—for years. It would be beside the mark for us to discuss the merits or demerits

of the *modus operandi* suggested; its tendencies were scarcely as far-reaching, I might almost say epoch-making, as you evidently claim your own to be. But such as it was, we allowed it to hang fire so long, that we wisely saved ourselves the probable disappointment of a flash in the pan. The pity of it is that we should have expended so much valuable energy in keeping it in its state of suspended animation, instead of bestowing that energy on a more profitable purpose. And now we are exactly as far as we were at the start."

"Not quite so far," interjected Phil; "remember the wasted energy."

"That need not concern you very much; you know we are a hardy and recuperative race," smiled Mr. Alexander.

"Still, while you recuperate, you may forget for what your strength is needed," said Phil, not without some bitterness.

"That we can never do," said Mr. Alexander firmly; "the evil knocks at our doors too loudly, in fact, day by day more loudly, to allow our ignoring it. And herein lies your chief claim to our consideration. That we should approach you with a certain amount of distrust, you must reasonably expect. You offer us a plan contrary to all precedent, a plan which apparently strides along with the seven-league boots of the giant in the fairy tale; and we should not necessarily be dubbed fossilized fogies if we give our spectacles a good rub to get at the true inwardness of it."

"But the Scheme is its own credentials," exclaimed Phil hotly.

"You can trust us with sufficient discretion to discover that for ourselves," replied Mr. Alexander, with

great equanimity; "it would not escape running the gauntlet, even if it came god-fathered by any one of our accredited leaders. Well, then, we should start with the fact I just mentioned—that the necessities of the case show no signs of diminishing; that a policy of trusting to things to right themselves is not justified by the course events are taking, and that by continuing it we run the risk of developing what at present is only a difficulty into a crisis calling for adjustment from without. We clearly, therefore, owe it to ourselves, both as a matter of duty as well as of self-interest, to obviate such a fatality at all costs. Your Scheme, it must be admitted, appears opportunely, at a moment when the mind of the community is not engrossed by considerations of minor import which so often burke the larger issues. That it does not consist of half-way or perfunctory measures, but strikes boldly at the core of the trouble, because it puts the right values on cause and effect, should not disqualify it for experiment—even though the experiment be the most expensive we have yet dared to permit ourselves. For, recollect—I have hinted it already—that your share in the movement can at best be only that of pioneers; it could never be but two men's work, even though they were demigods. The grand total of it cannot be reckoned by units; it must be counted by hundreds, by thousands, perhaps. In that case it becomes an effort worthy of all our combined strength. Nay, more, we should welcome the opportunity for making a grand demonstration—we must be careful not to turn it into an ostentatious parade—of our resources. The strong man feels all the stronger for testing his muscle."

"Well?" asked Phil, his face tense with suppressed

emotion. "Suppose Leuw and I cannot get beyond the ground-work, will you continue the building?"

"I am sincerely glad you put that in the shape of a question," replied Mr. Alexander. "I was afraid that my unqualified positiveness might have led you to assume too much—perhaps everything. But the only inference I can allow you to draw from my words is that we guarantee you our sentiments. Our sympathy may not carry us beyond a theoretical approval."

Phil leapt up from his chair as though stung. "What, and that despite the urgency which exists on your own showing?" he cried.

Mr. Alexander calmly shrugged his shoulders. "Urgency, my dear boy, is, like everything else, a relative term. It may mean a day or a life-time; and 'after us the deluge' has been the watchword of the world ever since Noah's Ark came to anchor on Mount Ararat. If every man who knows his duty were to act on his knowledge, we could safely pension off the Decalogue. You see, we may show ourselves ready to give you every credit for the high principle, the noble disinterestedness of your project; we may laud and applaud it to the skies, and we may do nothing more. Selfishness, culpable apathy, will be your verdict. But you will be wrong; the real cause will be something much less obvious, much less controllable—the mysterious contrariness, the wayward sulking with the occasion, which is our unconscious protest against being called upon to put in splints the things which have got out of joint. I do not say that our better judgment will not prevail; very possibly it may. Only I consider I am rendering you a distinct service in setting before you the potential negatives of the

case. But still, even if you do not obtain the support of the official body, you have another and perhaps more reliable string to your bow."

Phil and Leuw merely looked their enquiry.

"There are our *en gros* philanthropists," continued Mr. Alexander, "the men whose large-heartedness finds an outlet in every channel of communal charity. You would get them to see that the consummation of your Scheme would do much to remove the necessity for some of the Institutions which are the direct outcome of the state of things you would have them help you to remedy. By the creation of a main stream which, to a certain degree, will absorb the tributaries, they will find their purpose better served. And there can be no doubt that among the secondary benefits arising from the Scheme must be the abatement of the dole evil, resulting in a proportionate increase of self-respect and self-reliance among our poor, as well as a more systematic provision against old age and the unforeseen emergencies of daily life. But I apologize—I am straying beyond my province."

"Not unconsciously, though, Uncle Bram," smiled Phil, who by this time had regained his self-possession; "I can see your object; you did not want to end up with a raven's croak. You know yourself that your distinction between the *en gros* philanthropist and the so-called communal leader is quite artificial; the one is the other, and by casting doubt on the one, you involve both. But I shall relieve your anxiety: I have more faith in you than you yourselves have. You won't content yourselves with applauding us, although that might furnish you with an excuse for not putting your hands in your pockets; you won't sulk with

the occasion, because you know you have more to gain by conciliating it. And once you have recognized your duty, you are far too jealous of your credit with your contemporaries and with posterity to pass it by on the other side of the road. But should I be mistaken"—Phil got up, and his eyes flashed fire—"should I be mistaken, even then I do not consider our cause hopeless. We shall not be disheartened by having to deal in units; we shall compensate ourselves by making surer of the results. We must grow stronger from the very nature of our undertaking. For, as time goes on, we shall become our own recruiting-ground. At least some of the men whom we shall send out, and whom we have helped to a better chance of worldly success, to a truer knowledge of the possibilities of life, some of them, I say, if not all, will remember that they are failures, if they do nothing to help on the good work which has made them what they are. And they will help, as soon as they can, if only to vindicate themselves in their own eyes. They will come back, as Leuw and I have come back, because we are a people whose soul is their traditions, and who have learnt the knack of gripping the future with one hand while keeping hold of the past with the other. I have no taste for acquiring the reputation of a well-meaning hobby rider; the sanction of the community, and all it means, is to me a thing as solemn as it is valuable. But with it or without it, our purpose holds good. Does it, or does it not, Leuw?"

By way of answer, Leuw stepped up to Phil, laid his hand on the other's shoulder, and so the two stood looking at Mr. Alexander.

"Dear me," said the latter, in half-affected, half-genuine distress, "you make me feel quite uncomfortable. What have I done to deserve this distinctly threatening attitude of yours? My only offense was that I made my survey from the standpoint you assigned to me, and so had to leave the situation pretty much as I found it. I could not honestly do otherwise. And yet," he continued reflectively, "I don't know what reason you have to grumble; nothing in what I have said need lead you to expect a downright rebuff, and that by itself is as good as carrying the first position. And then—if you will at last permit me to speak on my own behalf—you can rest assured of at least one friend at court. Mr. Lipcott—Phil—I ask it of you as a favor; let me be your ambassador."

"I think this is the first authentic instance where a favor to the other man means a bargain to oneself," replied Phil buoyantly, as he linked his arm affectionately in Mr. Alexander's. "I must confess to you, Uncle Bram, we have got you ridiculously cheap; I was prepared for a tremendous outlay of canvassing. Now, then, Leuw, we have achieved enough for one day. Come and let us show our laurels to the ladies."

"Only don't make me out such a great acquisition, or I shall waste all my time in growing conceited," laughed Uncle Bram.

"You forget you will occasionally be called upon to report progress," retorted Phil.

"Of my conceit?"

"Of your embassy."

They found the ladies divided in two groups—the older three chatting away busily round the fireplace, Effie at the piano improvising softly, with Dulcie gaz-

ing up at her from the hassock close by. Effie did not appear to notice the entry of the men, except that her touch became fainter still; but Dulcie rose with alacrity, only to see her seat usurped by Phil the very next instant. Uncle Bram had been called over to the fireplace to arbitrate in some insignificant dispute, and Leuw was following him thither, when Dulcie intercepted him half-way. He halted readily.

"I have been waiting for you very patiently, Mr. Lipcott," she said with the naïveté of a child.

"Can I do anything for you?" he enquired eagerly.

"Yes, I want you to grant me your pardon."

"Most certainly, Miss Duveen. And now you may as well tell me for what."

"No, really, I am greatly in earnest. I have been reproaching myself during the last hour for scolding you the other evening, because you did not go into ecstasies over the glories of the children's treat. And with that for my starting-point, I wanted to prove to you that your whole philosophy of life was wrong. With your mind intent on such great things, how could you be expected to give even a passing thought to mere trivialities? How I must have annoyed—or amused you!"

"Let me assure you, you did neither."

"What else can you possibly say? Why, if I remember, I actually had the presumption to pity you. My only consolation is that perhaps you were not listening to me at all."

"But doing what?"

"Thinking of your wonderful Scheme. I don't know how you can let it be absent from your thoughts for a single instant. The length of my acquaintance

with it can only be measured by minutes, and I have already learned to love it."

Her face became troubled, and Leuw fancied he heard a sigh. Her next words convinced him.

"I am very sorry. I suppose to love it will be my only share in it."

Leuw looked at her curiously. "And why not your only share?" he asked.

She answered his look with one of undisguised indignation.

"Quite so, Mr. Lipcott; I ought to have been prepared for that question. If you men allow us women to sympathize with your work, to pray for its success, and—to look on from a distance, you think you have humored us sufficiently. I don't want to be humored, Mr. Lipcott, I want to help, to stand close by, and to feel that at least the tiniest wheel in the machine owes its motion to me. And yet, you are right"—her head drooped despondently—"is there anything I could do that you could not do doubly well? By intruding I should only succeed in preventing the best and fittest from being employed."

Leuw paused for a moment or two, and then bent his head closer to hers, so as to permit himself a sinking of the voice.

"Miss Duveen, you are unnecessarily severe on yourself, as you would have seen, had you waited for me to give the answer to your question. Let me tell you that there are certain things, as vital as any of those which will figure in the formal curriculum, but which neither Phil, nor myself, nor any man living could do half as well as you."

"You are not merely polite, Mr. Lipcott?" she asked with touching anxiety.

"Why should I trifle with you?" he returned gravely. "Listen, Miss Duveen. We shall be dealing with lads whose home life will have had its virtues, but will also have had its defects. Of the latter, those which fall under the heading of more regular discipline you can safely leave to us. But there may be others which we may not be able to reach—rough edges of character, perverted ways of thinking, which require the quick eye of a woman to detect, and the soft, dexterous touch of a woman in the handling. So, instead of an intrusion, your immediate presence will become an essential. It would do more to give them a clear sense of chivalry, of right-mindedness, than the most strenuous example; they would not dare to tell a lie, or harbor it in their hearts, if they knew that you and such as you were coming from time to time to read their faces. But, Miss Duveen, your function would not end there. These boys will be of an age when they feel the first stirrings of their self-consciousness, when they begin to ask themselves questions, and cannot always give an answer. They grow afraid of their future—it seems so near. Added to that may be distressing home circumstances; their work may be misunderstood, their aims belittled. That surely is the time when they most need somebody to rally their hopes, to heap fuel on their courage, to give them back their faith in themselves. And"—he half murmured the words—"I have always imagined that there is none so skilful as a woman in nursing a soul through a crisis."

Leuw paused, not in the least surprised at his own eloquence; he knew whence he derived his inspiration. It was the recollection of the lonely hours he had

struggled through by himself, the aching despondency which had attacked him whenever he had paused to take breath, though its causes were not exactly any one of those he had just enumerated. He only thought of his craving for something soft and sympathetic on which to recoil from the iron-like stubbornness of his own resolve. He had never had a woman friend; it was the one thing for which he had ever envied his brother Phil.

Dulcie, too, remained lost in thought. Then the radiance which Leuw's words had brought into her face, began to ebb, until it finally gave place to utter disconsolateness.

"Thank you, Mr. Lipcott," she said slowly. "You conjured up for me a pleasant dream. It is not your fault that I cannot make it last. How can I ever lift myself to the height of the task you exact from me? True, I have exerted my influence with little children, and perhaps not without success. But what guarantee have I that I shall make it felt on boys—boys that are to become what you wish to make them?"

"You have made it felt on men; so why should you not succeed with boys?"

The words fairly leaped from his mouth, and then, when he found that he had spoken and not thought them, a sudden strength entered into him. He drew himself up, proud and defiant. Let her know, then. It was as though he had disburdened himself of the weight of a humiliating secret.

"On men?" she repeated wondering.

But she had no need to enquire further; could she mistake the look in his eyes? Leuw held his breath: what was coming?

At first a silence; then a faint pallor over her cheeks—so faint, that perhaps it was only the reflected tint of the gleaming silk. But Leuw was not deceived, and his heart came into his mouth. She had understood, and yet she was not angry. For so her next words told him.

"I did not know I had influenced any men, Mr. Lipcott. If I have, I am glad you think it was for their good. Come, let us take pity on Phil and Effie; they seem to be boring each other dreadfully."

Obediently he followed her over to the piano. Her last remark was apparently no exaggeration. Effie had risen, and stood looking through a music album; she was just stifling a yawn. Phil was next to her, watching her with evident perplexity and vexation. Little or no conversation had passed between them.

"Well, what do you think of the Scheme?" he had asked her.

"It seems all right," had been her answer; "I dare say you will make it a success. Only I thought your ambition lay in another direction."

"What other direction?"

"Oh, I don't know; I can't trouble to think."

The groups converged again as the evening wore on. Its close brought Phil another rebuff. "I shall see you home," he said to Effie, as Mrs. Elkin rose to leave.

"No, thanks," was Effie's negligent reply; "mother and I can take care of each other for twenty yards or so."

Leuw also took his thoughts away with him. And so it was that Mrs. Lipcott, on her way home, found her two sons but poor company.

CHAPTER XXV

THE two months which followed were to Leuw not so much a succession of days and weeks as a linkless chain of unabating activity, entailed by the final transference of his affairs to his London establishment, the selection of his staff, and the thousand and one details preliminary to the working order of an extensive concern. It was true that before his return to London he had scarcely intended to set up operations on the large scale which now they seemed likely to assume. He had, perhaps, anticipated nothing more than the appointing of a reliable agent, and so to render his own presence in England necessary only at periodic intervals. But from the first day that he resumed contact with it, the fascination of this, the greatest business centre of the world, had magnetized him hopelessly. The stir and the bustle, the amazing, the magnificent manifestations of its multifarious energies, called out to him as though in challenge, and provoked all of the combativeness of his disposition. He felt that, whatever he had achieved, he had never touched the bed-rock of his powers; he had accumulated, it seemed to him, a surplus residuum of strength, which was continually crying out in protest against its own inutility. Here at last he could give it scope. It was time that he found outlet for it; it might become stale with too protracted disuse, and from being an available help grow into a cumbersome incubus.

In addition to the sense of his full-grown opportunities came the duty he owed to the Scheme—not, however, as a mere make-weight, but as a consideration of equal rank and force; more than equal, Leuw might have admitted to himself, had he dared. The Scheme itself had so far made but insignificant headway. Leuw's own pre-occupation had found its counterpart in Phil's, who could not afford to allow himself any further respite in the preparation for his law "Final." The examination had finished yesterday, and now Leuw was waiting for his brother in the private room he had detached for himself in the imposing offices off Throgmorton Street. It was at the advice of Mr. Alexander himself that they had decided on putting their project into practice without further delay, and without waiting for the weather-signs of public opinion. He thought it probable that the communal leaders would be more impressed with the desirability of the Scheme, if they saw its originators give token of their earnestness by an independent course of action. The spectacle of two individuals essaying the initiative of a task which, by the nature of it, must necessarily rely on support of which they had no guarantee, might turn its quixotic side to the more thoughtless. The more provident, however, would see in it nothing but evidence of a high-spirited disinterestedness; and the quiet confidence it argued could not but appeal intimately to their most generous instincts. And so the mere introductory steps might succeed in, so to speak, forcing the hand of the community. Mr. Alexander's view was perhaps prompted more by the fact that Leuw and Phil had evidently made up their minds to begin without

any side-glance at adventitious circumstances; but his hopeful words could not come amiss, even if looked at in the light of a spur to a willing horse. At any rate, the two brothers had arranged to meet that morning in order to deliberate finally on the all-important question of the site whereon the Institute was to be located.

If Leuw was reluctant to admit how greatly the Scheme had taken hold of him, it was because he knew that it had done so not altogether on its own merits. He would have had to own that, from being a goal in itself, it had, in some degree, become degraded to the level of a means to an end; and his whole being cried shame upon this discount on its dignity. He thought it nothing short of an act of defalcation to make capital out of it for the serving of his own purposes, however much his heart might tempt him thereto. For, indeed, he could not gainsay the fact that the Scheme was developing into an acknowledged bond of sympathy between himself and Dulcie. It raised for them a platform of mutual interest on which, if he had not known better than to give his hopes free play, Leuw might have fancied other things than her keen desire for its consummation would possibly find room. The enthusiasm wherewith Dulcie had welcomed the Scheme at her first knowledge of it had settled down into a reasoning, deep-rooted admiration the more its possibilities had taken shape in her imagination. Leuw, for his part, had availed himself freely of his right of access to the Duveen family circle, spending there at least one evening in every week. As to the consistency of Dulcie's cordiality, he could not—once he had got over his surprise at it—entertain any doubt.

Occasionally he felt the impulse to analyze what measure of it belonged to him as the man, and what as the embodied embryo of the Scheme, which, it was clear, Dulcie was taking more and more to her heart as a personal ambition. But he refrained; he might dupe himself into an illusion which he would find harder to bear than his present uncertainty. He even restrained his wonder at her complete disregard of the confession he had let slip from him. That she knew what she knew was unquestionable; he might have ascribed her ignoring it to the almost childlike ingenuousness of her character, or even to an unconscious coquetry, which showed the eternal feminine in her. But he did neither. He reflected that, after all, what he had said was liable, if she wished it, to a perfectly colorless interpretation, and did not impose on her any definite attitude. Instead, he reserved his perplexity for the understanding he had imagined to exist between Dulcie and Phil. It was clear to him that their bearing to each other was not by any means in keeping with his original notion. At times he suspected that it was a one-sided state of things, that Dulcie's response was warmer than Phil actually gave occasion for. Leuw, however, had never probed his brother, for fear of hearing something to ratify his suspicion. And Leuw would have been mortified beyond all measure at having wormed his way into a secret which even in a woman of coarsest fibre should be hedged in with a sanctity of its own. In Dulcie he would have deprecated it more for his own sake than for hers. Pity looks down, not up; if he pitied her—how would he be able to do otherwise?—he would be poorer by an ideal. And that is a loss no

right-minded man sustains without at once fancying himself on the brink of moral bankruptcy.

And so Leuw, as far as his emotions were concerned, had done nothing but mark time. His will-power had kept him stationary, because in front of him stretched unreconnoitred ground. But for all that he could give himself no guarantee that his self-restraint would hold out as long as he needed it. Some unguarded moment he would break loose, more unequivocally than on the other occasion, and then she would have no choice but an absolute rift. And Leuw was determined, if he could not gain Dulcie's love, to reserve himself the consolation of what was next best to it—her friendship. To that the Scheme had already contributed largely; but, unless he strained his conscientiousness unduly, he need not shrink from exacting yet another service from it: to answer him the question whether or not something more was possible. While the Scheme was yet in its theoretic stage, it was natural that Dulcie's thoughts should narrow themselves down to her anticipation. It would be different once it had become an actuality. As fellow-workers they would find more numerous points of contact. They would feel the necessity for mutual encouragement; they would penetrate into one another's hearts, to assure themselves that conjecture of success in the one found a true echo in the other; soul would speak more confidentially to soul. If, then, and that within reasonable time, something that was its own revelation did not filter forth, he would know she had nothing to reveal.

The oracle to which Leuw thus looked for guidance was not so far distant as would appear. The

night before had brought him a suggestion which, he was certain, Phil would hail as nothing less than an inspiration. It was to the effect that the interval between then and the erecting of a permanent home for the Institute should be valuably occupied by setting on foot a preliminary organization in temporary premises, which no doubt could be readily found. And so, when it was to be transferred to its domicile proper, the work would have got beyond its tentative flounderings, and could at once begin to steer its course along the track of a well-established routine. Leuw smiled to himself as he thought of the avidity wherewith Phil would snatch at the idea. It made his heart glow to feel he was preparing for his brother a keen and unexpected pleasure. Since his return Leuw's feelings had quickened towards Phil beyond his liveliest expectations. To tell the truth, he had looked forward to the resumption of their intercourse with some apprehension. Their lines of life had been so divergent that what should have been a reunion might have turned into a clashing—a clashing of sentiments, external and fundamental. Leuw had pictured Phil as a typical man of the world, cynic, supercilious, superficial, and had feared that the tie of kinship could be kept intact only by skilful accommodation on his own part. His disappointment had been as great as it was gratifying. And then had come the Scheme, providentially it almost seemed, to put the seal on their understanding, and make it absolute. The possession it had taken of Phil not only surprised Leuw—it had sometimes frightened him. Since that night at Mrs. Duveen's, when they first let the secret of it out of their keeping, Phil had referred to it on all

occasions with an uncompromising obstinacy, as though he were vindicating it in the teeth of a fiercely resolute opposition. To Leuw's mind there seemed no call for it. Mr. Alexander had so far furnished no definite report concerning his mission, but it was obvious from his manner that he had no cause to be discontented with his results. Leuw looked on this mysterious aggressiveness of Phil's as the dogged perseverance which was exercising itself on imaginary obstacles, so as to be able to cope better with whatever real ones might arise. The thought touched and comforted Leuw. Be the outcome of the Scheme what it might, here was at least one other man beside himself ready and willing to put his very best into it, to make it the labor of his life, to concentrate on it faculties which would be a force in any other province. Indeed, the certainty of Phil's co-operation was so far the only surety of success the Scheme possessed. What, in truth, was the Scheme without Phil? And now that it had assumed for Leuw a momentous side-issue as well. . . .

He rose hurriedly as he heard Phil's quick, eager knock at the door. A glance at the flushed face and bright, restless eyes told Leuw that his brother had not brought to the discussion of the weighty question before them the calm, sober state of mind which it demanded.

"Any news?" he asked.

"Yes, Leuw, great news—it came this morning," replied Phil, the quietness of his tone throwing his general agitation into stronger relief. "Read this."

Leuw's vague hope that Phil had brought with him some important announcement affecting the fortunes of the Scheme fell to zero as Phil handed him an

official-looking document. Slowly he unfolded it, and ran through the contents as fast as his half-dazed brain allowed him to take in their meaning. What he read was this:

St. James'-in-the-East Radical and Liberal Association.
January 10th, 18—.

Philip Lipcott-Duveen, Esq.,

Dear Sir.—I am desired by the Council of the above Association to communicate to you the following extract from their minutes:

“Resolved, that in view of the impending retirement of Sir Saul Simmondson, Bart., M. P., from the representation of the St. James'-in-the-East division of the Tower Hamlets, Mr. Philip Lipcott-Duveen be approached to contest the seat at the forthcoming General Election in the Liberal and Radical interest.”

The Council wish me to add that they are fully convinced of your competence to reach the high standard of efficiency and popularity which has been made a precedent in this constituency by Sir Saul, who would find in you a worthy successor. It is also the opinion of the Council that, by the many-sidedness of your labors in this neighborhood as well as by your keenly sympathetic attitude on all questions industrial and economic, you have secured for yourself the suffrages of the workingmen, who form the majority of the divisional electors, and have thus placed the result of the contest beyond all doubt.

Awaiting the favor of your early reply,

I am, dear sir,

Yours faithfully,

HENRY T. TYLER,

Hon. Sec.

Phil was striding up and down the room, deep in his own thoughts. Presently he turned, and saw that Leuw had finished reading, and was staring absently before him.

"Well?" he asked expectantly.

"Oh, ah, yes," said Leuw, looking up at him like a man startled out of a deep sleep. "I congratulate you, Phil."

Phil gripped the proffered hand, and recommenced his striding, but his step seemed more buoyant.

"I can't say I expected it," he rattled on eagerly, "nor do I flatter myself that the offer is due entirely to my own deserts. I knew I was making for myself something of a name in the neighborhood, although I had no idea it would lead to anything. And I am certain it would not, if Sir Saul—you know he is Aunt's cousin by marriage—had not been there to put in a strong word for me."

"Then I suppose you will accept?" asked Leuw mechanically.

"Suppose?" echoed Phil with mingled surprise and reproach. "You surely don't expect me to let such a magnificent chance run to waste? I should have notified my acceptance by return of post, though it would have looked a little undignified. Only I remembered that, before actually doing so, I ought to assure myself formally of a certain something, even if I have every reason to consider that assurance a foregone conclusion."

Leuw did not enquire into the meaning of Phil's somewhat cryptic reference. He was dimly conscious that Phil had reasonable cause for taking umbrage at his utter lack of interest; but Phil evidently noticed nothing.

"By Jove, Leuw," he went on radiantly, "I can't help wondering at my luck. Here is a thing which, if I had struggled after it ever so hard, might never have got within my reach, and now drops into my lap like a ripe apple from a tree. I never thought it possible to take so much pride and pleasure in a prize a man hasn't worked for; it is enough to revolutionize all my ideas on the disciplinary value of putting one's hand to the plough. Still, I dare say you have something better to do than listen to my cheap moralist maunderings. So long, then; don't forget you are booked for Aunt's this evening."

He was about to hurry from the room, when he stopped abruptly, and stood fumbling with the door knob.

"Oh, by the way—really, I must be quite off my head with excitement," he said awkwardly. "About the Scheme, Leuw. Of course, it will be clear to you that I shall be unable to take any active part in it for the next six months or so, when I shall naturally have my hands full with the election campaign. After that I shall be once more at your disposal. We can hardly flatter ourselves that the trifling delay will result in hurrying on a crisis, can we?"

And nodding smilingly, he hastened out.

Leuw remained alone with a great emptiness in his heart. No wonder it felt so hollow; had not Phil taken everything out of it? It was even void of any trace of resentment against the despoiler. Leuw had retained enough presence of mind to see that to blame a man for acting humanly was to pick a quarrel with God. What else was he to expect but that Phil should be dazzled by the glitter of his splendid opportunity?

Perhaps if it had not flashed on him so suddenly, he might have had time to shut his eyes to the temptation, to collect himself, and remember the duty he owed to his purpose. As it was, he could hardly be called a renegade.

So Leuw made excuses to himself for Phil, feeling glad that the brotherly love on which he had congratulated himself just before had survived the supreme test to which it had been put. He forgave him everything. He forgave the niggardly apology which Phil had tendered him for throwing over the Scheme like old lumber, and which Leuw might have regarded as a personal slight. He forgave the perfunctory promise Phil had held out to him—as it were for a sop—a promise that was self-contradictory on the face of it. Was it not obvious that the stress of Phil's parliamentary duties must preclude the idea of his identifying himself, whole or even part, with the fortunes of the Scheme?

Yes, the Scheme was dead—dead ere its birth. One question seemed to stare at him wherever he looked: what would Dulcie say? For answer it came home to him what else the death of the Scheme meant for himself. It meant . . . But no; he was not going back on his word. He had forgiven his brother Phil, and there the matter ended. Phil had chosen to wash his hands of the obligations that called to him. So Leuw would have to work for the two of them, in order to make good the other's dereliction and retrieve the family honor. That he could not carry out what he had set his heart on, was no reason why he should fold his hands idly, despondently. There were many things he could do; and—Phil or no Phil—he would do them.

He took up his hat, and went into the open. But though he thought he had gathered in his reins of self-control as short as possible, never had the streets roared so loudly—never had they flaunted so boldly their stony pitilessness for souls in travail.

CHAPTER XXVI

PHIL'S errand lay towards St. John's Wood. His buoyancy prompted a journey on foot thither, while his impatience counseled a cab. The latter carried the day, much to Phil's eventual satisfaction, for just as he got to the house, he found Mrs. Duveen on the point of sallying out for a morning call.

"What has happened?" she asked, catching both his hands in hers.

"Nothing much—only this," laughed Phil, as disengaging one hand he held out to her the letter from the Association.

"A surprise, isn't it?" he said gleefully, watching her face light up.

"Not altogether," she replied, resuming once more possession of both his hands. "Sir Saul warned me the other day that I would shortly hear of 'something to your advantage,' though I had no idea it would be this."

"I am keeping you," said Phil with some anxiety.

"Not in the least; you are much more important than my call," replied Mrs. Duveen, quickly untying her bonnet-strings. "Come, sit down here, and talk about it."

"That is what I very much want to," said Phil soberly. "Is—is Dulcie in?"

"No, she would not let the fine, dry day slip by without her bicycle-spin."

Phil looked relieved. "Because I don't want any-

body to interrupt us for ten minutes or so," he explained apologetically.

"Quick, tell me," came from Mrs. Duveen.

"The fact of the matter is I cannot accept this invitation without your consent," said Phil resolutely.

"Without my consent?" Mrs. Duveen smiled incredulously.

"That is what it comes to, Aunt. A parliamentary career means certain expenses, both before and after the election, and at present I could not dream of taking these on myself."

"Ah!" breathed Mrs. Duveen.

"The very moment the offer reached me, I made up my mind to come and ask for your help, ask it of my own accord, instead of beating about the bush, and waiting till you found out, and came to make advances yourself. I wanted, in a way, to retrieve myself for having done that so often. Whenever you showed yourself ready to do me a favor, I in a way resented it, and then in the end gave in with a bad grace, which must have made you feel you were accepting the favor instead of conferring it. This time I don't want to run the risk of putting you in such a false position."

"Don't say that, Phil," entreated Mrs. Duveen.

"But I will say it, and more too," disobeyed Phil. "I want to let you see how thoroughly I know you. Not only have I made up my mind to ask you for your help, but I am prepared to stand or fall by your answer. It is through you, and you alone, that I have come to the point where I can take this great leap; and therefore it is due to you, as your sole and incontestable right, to do me this final, this culminat-

ing service. I might have asked it of my brother Leuw, and I know I should not have been refused. But—I say it again—I shall take it from you, or not at all. If it is out of your will or out of your power . . .”

“Phil, it is neither—believe me, Phil, it is neither,” broke in Mrs. Duveen with almost pitiful eagerness. “Oh, you don’t know how glad and proud you have made me feel.”

Phil came over to her, and stood looking into the kind, moist eyes uplifted to his. It was some seconds before he spoke again.

“Thank you, dear, thank you. I will not be so mean as to deceive you. It was because I was so sure of you that I did not hesitate to break down my bridges—I mean, that I resolved to approach no one else after you. As it is, I wish to suggest a compromise. I want the money not as a gift, but as a loan. It is ridiculous of me to think of returning to you in cold coin all I have actually cost you. But I must begin somewhere. Everybody tells me my prospects at the bar are good. And after all I am selfish enough to wish to safeguard my feelings. This is not a matter entirely between ourselves. It would not do me any good to go about with the idea that I am robbing Dulcie.”

“Robbing Dulcie? With Bram to look after her?”

“It would be useless and ungracious of me to pursue the subject any further just now; only I reserve myself the right to my own thoughts. Once more, then, many, many thanks.”

And this time his lips did more than speak his gratitude.

Then he resumed immediately.

"But I am not done with you yet."

"I don't want you to be, dear," was the smiling reply.

"I don't know whether you will be equally pleased."

"Still, I shall risk hearing you. Is it again a matter of my consent?"

"Perhaps you will think it ought to be," said Phil, his eyes seeking the ground; "but even if you do, I cannot possibly leave it to your discretion. It is something I must take into my own hands, and my telling you so is as much as you can expect."

"You mean Effie?" said Mrs. Duveen quickly.

Phil looked at her startled and anxious. "How do you know?"

"You foolish boy, how could I help knowing? Everybody knows."

"Do you—do you think Effie does?" quavered Phil.

Mrs. Duveen sat up in her surprise.

"Surely you are not serious in asking me that?" she demanded.

"Why not? If you gauged my feelings so correctly, why not hers?"

"And you mean to imply that you have not assured yourself on that point?"

"If I had, there would be no need for me to do so now. I did think at one time that I could draw certain conclusions; but of late I have become a little doubtful."

"I can't understand it—it seems so strange," mused Mrs. Duveen.

Phil deliberated. Should he explain her the mystery? His intention had ever been to keep it under cover, for his telling of it must needs involve a certain amount of self-glorification. But then again he considered she would probably lose sight of that in the delight which the revelation would bring to her. And she had been so good to him that to refrain from giving her every particle of joy it was in his power to give seemed a downright act of despoliation. . . .

And so he told her—told her nearly in the very words he had repeated to himself the evening he conned his diary to take stock of things as they were—how he had held back from Effie, because he wanted Mrs. Duveen to retain her claim on him unshared, unchallenged, as long as he could let her do so without fatally injuring his chances for what he considered an essential in the economy of his future. And now the time had come, and he dared not tarry any longer.

He had not miscalculated his results. With a little cry of exultation Mrs. Duveen hurried up to him, and laid her hands on both his shoulders; there was an air of benediction in the gesture.

“And then you talk to me of loans instead of gifts?” she asked with a reproachfulness that was more tender than a caress. “I should, indeed, be a hard creditor, if after this I did not make you out a quittance in full. Phil, Phil, I wish I could summon up heart to scold you. How dare you think I should demand from you such a sacrifice? You should have distinguished, for my sake, between generosity and extravagance. We have—that is, you have—spoken too, too often of the give-and-take there has been between us. Please, Phil, promise this will be the last

time; your mere hinting at it again would shame me unutterably."

"I hoped it would make us a little more even," replied Phil simply.

"Say a little more than even, and you will be right. And now I am going to make good to you the balance—with nothing more than a piece of womanly advice. Don't let Effie guess that the reason for your—your dilatoriness was your consideration for another woman, or I should not answer for the consequences. I say it, not because she is Effie, but because I know my sex."

"That is harsh criticism," smiled Phil. "But, seriously, I had thought of that already. Don't be afraid, though; I am not going to approach the woman I am asking to be my wife with a lie. The reason I have prepared for her is equally honest."

"Well, let it be any reason but the one you gave me," iterated Mrs. Duveen. "When will you see her?"

"I expect to find her at home now."

"Then go. You know my good wishes go with you."

As Phil walked down the half length of street which separated Mrs. Duveen's house from that of Mrs. Elkin, there came upon him an access of regret that he had not made the latter his first destination. He grew unpleasantly conscious that the high-mettled, almost truculent self-satisfaction with which he had started forth in the morning had somehow taken to itself a leakage. There was a flabbiness, a want of tone in his mood, which disconcerted him by its alarming inadequacy to the purpose in hand. And

yet, there had been nothing in his interview with Mrs. Duveen but what was strong, inspiriting; it ought to have acted on him like an astringent. And then he knew. If the cause did not lie in the past, it must lie in the future. It was quite true. He was going forward to meet, not an unquestionable certainty, but an issue veiled in doubt. It was Effie's ambiguous behavior during the past few months which was demoralizing him. He had tried to puzzle it out more than once; but each time he had got no further than ascribing it to a whim, a humor, which, from his knowledge of her, might pain, but not perplex him. And now it came on him as an inspiration, which caught his breath, that it might mean something else, something vitally, mortally, different from his conjecture. His fear grew to a frenzy; he almost ran the last few yards.

"Oh, it's you?" said Effie looking up languidly from her writing-table as he entered.

"It is," he replied rather lamely.

She made no move to shake hands. "Mother is taking it easy this morning; she has a bit of a headache," continued Effie.

"I am very sorry," said Phil.

Effie ignored his sympathy. "Which means I can't practice, because she says she can feel me playing even though she can't hear me. I don't know whether to take it as a compliment or not. So I am bringing my correspondence a little more up to date."

"Am I interrupting you?"

"Not particularly. Sit down. What are you doing in the neighborhood at this time of the day?"

"I called at Aunt's," he replied dully. Her cold,

matter-of-fact reception had made him effervesce utterly. He felt all dregs.

Effie made some commonplace enquiries concerning Mrs. Duveen and Dulcie, and there was a pause.

"You seem busier than ever at the piano lately," said Phil finally.

"All people have their hobbies—I don't see why I should be an exception," she rejoined with an irritation he could not understand. There was a second pause. Phil attempted to tide it over by prodding a piece of coal perilously overhanging the grate back into safety.

"Do you want to go on with your letters?" he asked without facing round on her.

"I think I shall, if you continue to be so entertaining."

Phil pulled himself together. He could not let this go on. This was how most of their conversation had of late got to assume its strained tone. But to let it reach tension point to-day was, perhaps, to create a situation which might prove irretrievable. Gently Phil laid down the fire-iron, rose, and stood suppliantly before her.

"Effie, I want you," he pleaded in a whisper.

She rose also, retreated a step or two, startled and confused.

"Want me? What for?"

"For myself, Effie. Don't you understand?"

She made no reply, but walked up to the window, where she stood drumming a tattoo. Presently she turned round to him.

"Why did you not come before?" she asked as though she were enquiring for the hour of the day.

He had thought himself well-prepared for the question, he had expected it; and yet, now that it was put, it took him like an ambush.

"Effie, am I too late, am I?" he cried wretchedly.

"I asked you why you did not come before," she repeated.

"Because I had nothing to bring you—except myself, and I was afraid that would not be enough for you," was the answer, eagerly obedient. "What indeed had I to show you? Petty little successes, trifling triumphs, which in the aggregate came to nothing. It was all promise, no achievement. And I remembered how ambitious you were for me. Two months ago I thought I was giving you earnest that I meant great things by letting you know of the Scheme, mine and Leuw's. You did not think so; you flouted it. And because you flouted it, I took it to my heart all the more strenuously, insisted on it with more and more emphasis, hoping to convince you in the end that its greatness was scope enough for any man. And I should have gone on trying till I had succeeded. But now I can offer you something else—something you will consider greater, because in its way it is more self-evident. Listen, Effie, to what occurred this morning. Oh, why do you make me feel I am talking to deaf ears?"

"I beg your pardon; I did not know you wanted me to adopt a gape-mouthed attitude."

And she was about to settle herself back in her chair, when a quick, impulsive movement lifted her up again, and the next moment he felt her arms about his neck, and her cheek pressed close to his.

"Phil, my Phil," she murmured, "I tried with all

my strength to be hard and cold and distant to you, but I can't—I can't Phil; don't tell me what happened this morning—at least not before I have told you I want you too, that I want you not for what you do, but for what you are. Have you heard me say that, Phil?"

"Yes, dear, I have heard it."

"And now, what did happen this morning? Quick, Phil."

And with words that tripped and stumbled over each other in hot-footed eagerness, he poured his story upon her. And then when he had finished, she made him go through it again so that she could count every word. Finally she made him produce the letter. Then she was satisfied.

"And now let us keep perfectly quiet for five minutes, so that I can tell myself you love me," she laughed.

But she did not keep very good count of time, for almost immediately her tongue was at work again.

"Phil, darling, I am terribly disappointed. Look at the bold, broad, glaring day outside."

He cast a half-frightened glance through the window. Then, thinking he had caught her drift, he answered smilingly:

"Well, dearest, let it glare. We shan't let it glare us out of countenance, shall we?"

And with beaming defiance he availed himself of his new-found privileges.

She put him from her gently. "Oh, you dear stupid, I didn't mean that. I meant that I had always imagined this picture in a different setting."

"And what was your setting, dear?"

"Certainly not this horribly prosy, methodical room, with the sun staring in rudely inquisitive. I thought it would be some wild, grand, boldly jutting crag, standing all alone along the coast, like a proud outcast, with the organ-boom of the incoming tide mounting up from below and the soft moonlight playing on it pityingly above. . . ."

"And extremely convenient for jumping over in case you said no," added Phil jestingly.

"Don't," she said, clapping her hand to his mouth. "What a shame! Now you have taken all the sentiment out of it. But never mind, dear; we will talk sense instead. Do you think I have nothing to tell you?"

"Yes, indeed, dear," he said gravely. "You have to tell me why you maltreated me so horribly, when—when you really didn't want to."

"No, I didn't want to, only you made me. I was waiting—waiting, and you stood as far off as ever. What was I to think? What but that you fancied you could keep trailing me like a poor fish which had bitten on to the hook, and that you could pull me in when you thought you were getting tired of the sport? And that made me angry—oh, so angry. And besides, I felt people were looking questions at me, and I dared not even shrug my shoulders, and say: I don't know. So, instead, I had to make believe I didn't care. When it came to a struggle between my feelings and my pride, I could not have any doubt which was to win, could I, dear?"

"I suppose you had to do as you thought right," he said soothingly.

"And all this time you were paying me the highest

tribute a man can pay a woman—you did not think yourself good enough for me," she went on, her self-reproach getting the upper hand of her. "But, Phil, we both had a narrow escape; had you waited a little longer, we might have lost each other for always."

He paled visibly. "Then there was another man?" he said fiercely.

"Not one man, but many, and women too, for the matter of that. In fact, Phil, the world might have taken me from you."

"Don't play at riddles, Effie, dear," he begged earnestly.

"Wait a moment," she said, proceeding to unlock a little drawer in the writing table. "I kept it here, right under mother's nose, where she would not think of looking for contraband," she added half laughing.

Phil saw little cause for amusement; he saw still less as he glanced through the stamped and signed agreement, in which it appeared that a certain somebody contracted with Miss Effie Elkin for a series of twelve concerts during the months of March, April, and May.

"What made you do this?" he asked, looking at her aghast.

"You did, dear. I had to go in for something to take me out of myself. I was willing to sink my own ambition in yours; but when I saw you made no call for the sacrifice, it would have been wasteful not to utilize it for my own self, would it not, dear?"

"And what are you going to do now?" he asked, ignoring her point.

"I shall do what you tell me."

"No, no, don't leave it to me. Speak for yourself," he said quickly.

"Ah! there it is—the inveterate conceit of you men. You want to hear from my own lips that I give up everything for you. Well, then, if it will please you—I do give up everything."

"Don't put it like that," he entreated joyously. "Say you are transferring it."

"Look what a lot of appreciating you will have to do to make up for the world," she smiled, not perhaps without a tinge of regret.

"I am not afraid of the magnitude of the task, dear. Tear up that," he said, pointing to the contract with sudden resentment.

"Oh, no, let me keep it, as a memento."

"Your wishes are mine," he replied with gallant tenderness.

"Phil, I am only beginning to feel how glad I am about your going into Parliament. It seems such a big thing—big enough to accommodate your and my ambitions comfortably. I don't think the Scheme would have done that, however sanguine you may have been of persuading me to the contrary. I have a sort of instinctive grudge against it, perhaps because, when I first heard of it, the thought uppermost in my mind was that it would take you further and further away from me. And you are going to do well, very well, are you not?"

"How could I help it, with you at my side?"

"And another thing, Phil, dear. You owe me some reparation for your—your aggravating conduct."

"Effie, anything you ask," he broke in eagerly.

"Ah! you think I am going to impose on you some heroic penance, do you?" she laughed. "Don't flatter yourself—I am not going to honor you so signally. It only means gratifying a foolish whim of mine. Don't give away our secret for—say, a week."

"And what about you?"

"I can tell whomever I like. That will, in a way, be giving me the start of you."

"It isn't so easy a penance as you think," he said half ruefully.

"I see," she laughed delightedly, "because it touches your vanity. You want to start bragging about your conquest."

Half an hour passed.

"Well, is this as good as the cliff by moonlight?" whispered Phil.

"Better. There is no chance of your jumping over."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE comparative solitude with which Leuw hedged himself that day did nothing to wear the edge off the disappointment the morning had brought him. And so he looked forward with greater satisfaction to spending the evening at Mrs. Duveen's, hoping that the congenial atmosphere of the house would be more effective in making him once more master over himself. Moreover, he was dogged by an irresistible curiosity to ascertain how Dulcie regarded the new development of things. He took care to indulge in no extravagant hopes; Phil's defection had prepared him for anything. He tutored himself into equanimity at hearing her join in the chorus of gratification as loudly as the rest. Perhaps he ought to feel grateful for the timely reminder that the dwellers of this earth were not yet qualified to change places with the angels; also that illusions which one hugs to oneself very tightly are liable to get crushed out of shape. But his heart rebelled nevertheless.

He left the office at six, and, not being due at St. John's Wood till half past eight—he generally preferred to get there after dinner—he had ample time for calling back at home in order to press Mrs. Lipcott to accompany him; she had not been quite sure in the morning whether she would care to. As he got near the turning off the Mile End Road, he stopped and faced round in response to a detaining hand he suddenly felt upon his shoulder.

"Excuse me, sir, aren't you Leuw Lipcott?"

Leuw looked hard at the enquirer, a sallow, narrow-chested young man, dressed in rather nondescript fashion, but with an unmistakable attempt at keeping up appearances.

"Yellow Joe, isn't it?" asked Leuw in turn.

"And no mistake about the yellow, eh?" was the reply, accompanied by a thin, hollow laugh.

"I am sorry you met me," said Leuw seriously.

"Are you? Well, we can soon put that right again. Good evening."

"Here, don't be a fool," cried Leuw, taking a step after him and catching him by the arm. Joe stopped obediently.

"I mean, because by meeting me you have cut the ground from under my feet," continued Leuw. "I had made up my mind to hunt you up one day this week. I couldn't before; I was too busy."

"Then you hadn't forgotten me?"

"You'll have to be satisfied with my word for it now. Good God, man alive, what has become of your shoulders?"

"I don't know, but the man I work for measures fifty-five round the waist," replied Joe with apparent unconcern.

"Tell me all about yourself."

"You'll only waste your time by listening. Have another look at me instead."

"No, no, you won't get out of it that way."

"Since you are so pressing," said Joe with mock politeness, "by the way, I don't like pressing. That's what did for me. You know which I mean—across the damp cloth, one iron on, the other off, sixteen

hours a day. And one fine morning I feel there's a hitch in my inside machinery, which meant I was going the same way father had gone—a very bad way, if you remember. So I thought I'd get out of that workshop before they came with the stretcher."

"Which was very wise of you," remarked Leuw, rather superfluously.

"I couldn't afford to be foolish; there were eight of them at home to pay for it, if I were. Hospital's a cheaper place to go to than heaven. When I got out again, I took a leaf out of your book, and with what I scraped, borrowed, and begged, went into shop-keeping."

"And?" prompted Leuw.

"Got out of it nearly as quick. Everybody can't be as lucky—I beg pardon, I meant to say, as clever—as Leuw Lipcott. Good job, too."

"What do you mean by that, Joe?"

"I mean that some of us, that is to say, some of our people, have got to be failures. The world's jealous enough of us as it is. If we were all successful, or at least more of us than are, it might, one of these days, put us into a sack and drown us in the Red Sea."

"And so you were content to sacrifice yourself for the good of the rest," said Leuw—he did not know himself whether in jest or earnest. A great truth seemed latent somewhere in Joe's theory.

"Sacrifice is too big a word to use with a small man like me," replied the latter, "but it was a very good idea to have about me when the blue devils came on."

"It ought to be patented, I think," said Leuw. "What are you doing now?"

"Getting quizzed, it looks like."

"No."

The monosyllable, masterful in its brevity, cowed and convinced Joe.

"That was six years ago," he resumed. "Then I tried you again."

"Tried me again?"

"Your advice, that is. 'Keep up your handwriting and figures, Joe,' do you remember that? Well, I remembered. You wouldn't say a thing if there was nothing in it. There was. A capmaker, in a fair way of business, wanted somebody to keep his books. He's a very good-natured man—he has to be because of his fifty-five inches round the waist—but he knows I am not keen on putting my services up for auction. He doesn't say he knows, but he conveys it to me gently in the salary he pays me. He's so very considerate; the reproachful way he shakes his head each time I ask him for a rise is simply heart-breaking. But I don't mind. The youngsters have nearly all learnt to shift for themselves, and fifteen shillings a week will be enough for what's left of me."

"I'll tell you something, Joe. You've paid me the compliment of taking my advice, and you haven't done very well with it."

"I'd have done much worse without it," interrupted Joe.

"That isn't the point. If I don't want to look a fool, I've got to see that you do better. There's a desk waiting for you at my office. Give that old pot-belly of yours notice."

"I needn't. He never would give me an agreement. I'll be at your place nine o'clock to-morrow morning."

"That's business-like. Here's the address."

Joe took the card and looked at it. "So you are in the City?" he asked with curious eagerness.

Leuw nodded.

"Then I suppose I had better come in a top hat?"

"It's just as well you did. Any objection?"

"Objection?" answered Joe his face lighting up. "Why, it always was the dream of my life to walk about the streets in a chimney-pot."

"Well then, wait till the summer comes," laughed Leuw.

"That's all right—I'm used to doing things in the sweat of my brow," said Joe dryly. "To-morrow at nine, then, and in a top hat."

He was making off, when a sudden thought stopped him.

"I'll thank you for this when I've got my wits back a bit, and can do it decently," he said under his breath. And then his feelings evidently got the better of him, for, with a preliminary jump, he doubled off as fast as his legs could carry him.

Leuw gazed after him with a quiet smile on his lips. Then he pursued his course more briskly, not so much to make up for lost time, but because he had gathered new motive power. It was the knowledge that the day, after all, had not passed by entirely futile and profitless.

He found his mother awaiting him impatiently.

"I don't understand it at all—I mean about Phil," were her first words to him.

"Ah, then you know."

"He dashed up this morning in a cab and told me. . . ."

"So he was at least decent enough for that," muttered Leuw.

"What's that you are saying?"

"Oh, yes, it's quite true. He's going in for Parliament."

"What, the real Parliament, where they govern the country?"

"Yes, mother. But I've got news for you, too."

"Have you?" There was more fear than curiosity in the enquiry.

"We must pack up here and quit."

"But why?"

"We've got to get into a bigger house and a more fashionable neighborhood."

"But you said all along that you wouldn't. We weren't going to make any show, and just keep on living quietly down here as if—as if nothing had happened. And besides you wanted to remain on the spot, so that you could look better after the Scheme when it was started. . . ."

"Quite right, mother, I did say so. But Phil has changed all that. You see, now that we are going to have an M. P. in the family, we are compelled to put on a little more style, if only to keep up the dignity of the country. Don't look so frightened, mother. You will soon get used to the footman."

"Footman? What are you thinking of, Leuw?"

"Well, we will do without one," smiled Leuw.

"But I can't let you off the big house."

"Leuw, Leuw—if only your father were alive to help me carry all this greatness," cried Mrs. Lipcott. "You don't know how it frightens me. I am beginning to distrust the future."

"Distrust the future by all means; everybody should. Trust me instead, mother," said Leuw, his hand on her shoulder.

"Can I?" She looked up at him wistfully. "You know, Leuw, my greatest fear I haven't yet told you of. I scarcely dare to."

"Is it so terrible as all that?"

"Yes, because it refers to something I desire with all my heart, and still can't think of without quaking inwardly. Leuw, one of these days you will—I hope you will—be giving me a daughter. I dare say she will be a woman who is born to the life which I shall be struggling to master as a child struggles with its lessons. And she may not understand me and my ways. What then, Leuw?"

"Then I shall be there to explain you to her. But it won't be necessary. I would make sure that the daughter I gave you would be content to take you as you were, and measure you by your own standard."

"I know one who would do that. If I could have my choice, Leuw. . . ."

"Yes?" asked Leuw quickly.

"I was hoping I would have no need to tell you her name—that you would know yourself."

"What I do know is, that at present I haven't the time for guessing it," said Leuw, looking hastily at his watch. The subterfuge would not have deceived a babe in arms, but Mrs. Lipcott let it pass unchallenged. "If you are coming, mother, you must get ready at once," continued Leuw.

"No, thank you, Leuw. I would rather stop in—especially after what you have told me. I want to see as much of this house as I can, while I have the

chance. I passed many a sad and anxious hour in it, and that's why it has grown so dear to me."

When Leuw arrived at St. John's Wood, he found himself balked in his expectations of spending a quiet evening. Mrs. Duveen had made no secret of the distinction offered to Phil, and the result was an impromptu gathering of the more intimate friends of the house eager to tender their congratulations. Leuw noticed, somewhat to his surprise, that Phil still maintained the exultant mood of the morning; the lapse of the day should have been sufficient to bring him back to a more neutral condition of mind. And then again Leuw reflected that it was as unfair to blame Phil for not having become sobered, as it would be to blame himself for having been unable to drag himself out of the slough of his despondency. What he regretted was that his errand here would be fruitless; there seemed little chance of taking away with him the solace he so urgently needed. As Phil's brother, or it might have been on his own merits, he came in for a good deal of attention; he succeeded in keeping up an equable demeanor, but the strain tried him cruelly. He would have taken his leave after the first half-hour; but he could not tear himself away without a word or two to Dulcie. He had an idea that she reciprocated his wish; at least, he caught various glances of hers in his direction which might be construed so. A garrulous old lady had taken possession of her, and was pounding away at her mercilessly. Even from where he stood, Leuw could notice that Dulcie's attention was only perfunctory; occasionally she looked distinctly distressed; no doubt, garrulous old ladies were very trying. More for Dulcie's sake than his own, he wished this particular one—to bed.

But he waited on. His impression seemed to have been correct. The moment her tormentor rose to go, Dulcie came straight up to him.

"I haven't had a chance of congratulating you," she said.

"Oh, about Phil? Thank you. But you are equally entitled to congratulations."

"So others have thought. 'I accept them.'"

She looked about her sharply. They were fairly out of everybody's hearing. A sudden change came over her face.

"No, I won't accept them from you," she broke out with bated vehemence. "I have had enough of pretending to the others—mother and all. But I must speak out to somebody. I don't think it is anything to feel glad about. He ought not to have taken the invitation. He ought to have waited—waited till he had made proper headway with what had a previous claim on him. Oh, he has disappointed me terribly, first on account of the Scheme, and secondly on account of himself—at least, I hardly know which to put first and which second. I never thought Phil could do anything which he would have to live down in my estimate of him. And now I have come out with it all you can scold me as much as you like. But I suppose you are so proud of him that nothing I could think or say would make a pin's head of difference."

"Miss Duveen," said Leuw softly, "your need of a confidant must have been very great indeed, when you come to me, of all people. Wasn't I least likely to give your complaint a patient hearing?"

"If I have hurt you—I retract—I retract every word. Oh, I am so very sorry. . . ."

"And I am very glad," he interrupted quickly, "for now I need not scruple to ask you for a return service. I, too, have confidences to make."

"About what?"

"About the same subject as yours. I deserve congratulations on Phil's account as little as you have just told me you do."

"Then you, too, think he has done wrong?" she asked.

"That is where I must differ from you. He has not done wrong; he has simply done otherwise than I expected him to."

"Of course, you must defend him; he is your brother," she said bitterly.

"He has certain claims on your indulgence, too," Leuw reminded her. "No, Miss Duveen, I should make the same allowances for anybody else's brother. My only grievance against him is that he has ignored what after all is only a personal predilection of mine. I revenge myself on him sufficiently by not feeling unconditionally glad of what he has given his preference to."

"A generous revenge—but oh, it is such a pity—the Scheme."

"Then be also generous; make allowances for. . . ."

"Very well, I do," she said quickly. "What have I to take umbrage at? He hasn't wronged me. I beg his pardon. I was very presumptuous."

"No, don't say it like that. Remember, you might have hurt me by talking of my brother as having to live things down."

She looked at him. "After that I can have no alternative," she replied. "Mr. Lipcott, I say it without

afterthought: Phil of to-day is to me the Phil of yesterday. But it is such a pity, the Scheme," came her murmur, like a refrain. "I suppose it is dead?"

"It seems so," answered Leuw, shaking his head. "It may have a resurrection. If it has not, it will at least be more fortunate than a great many men and things. It will leave one sincere mourner."

"Two," she corrected him reproachfully.

"Two—I beg your pardon; but you know the selfishness of sorrow. And then, to tell the truth, I gave you the opening purposely."

"What for? To test me?"

He did not answer, but stood smiling at her, his heart in his mouth.

"I thought I had given you enough assurance of my sympathy through good and ill," was her reply.

But not her whole reply, nor even the essential part of it. That was contained in the strange glance she flashed at him from eyes that immediately became downcast again. The sense of suddenness and brilliance had on Leuw all the effect of lightning. It had taken him so unawares that the very next instant left him in doubt whether or not anything unusual had occurred. And so he stopped dumb and strained, waiting for a possible repetition, and all alert to seize on it with the full force of his perceptiveness. But chance was against him.

"I really can't stop a moment longer—you know I promised mother to be back early," said Effie, breaking in on them—so it appeared to Leuw—from somewhere out of space.

"I shall go with you for your things," replied Dulcie instantly.

Leuw somehow did not regret the interruption so very keenly. It had probably saved him from making himself absurd in one way or another.

Dulcie had reached her room, and, looking back, found that her companion had only got half-way up the staircase—a reversal of the usual order of things.

“What’s the matter, Eff?” she asked as soon as the other was level with her. “You seem to have been sleep-walking all the evening.”

Effie followed her in, deliberately closed the door, and sat down on the couch.

“Lucky for your visitors I did,” replied Effie dispassionately. “If I had not bottled myself up so safely—rammed the cork in as tight as I could, I should have been nothing short of a scandal.”

“What, dumps again?” queried Dulcie solicitously.

For answer Effie threw herself back and began to laugh—not a laugh of amusement, but a series of ominous, hiccougling giggles. Dulcie, after the first shock, recovered her presence of mind, snatched at the smelling salts, and applied them.

“Eff, dear, you mustn’t be foolish,” she reproved, watching anxiously for the result.

“It isn’t foolishness,” said Effie, with a long breath of relief; “it’s only reaction.”

“Reaction after what?”

“After the bottling. I made him promise not to tell any one for a week, and that I might if I wanted to, and then it seemed like taking an unfair advantage, and so I was going to keep the secret with him, and it nearly killed me. You see, I couldn’t even tell mother, because when she has one of her nervous headaches on the doctor says she mustn’t be excited. But some-

body had to know, and failing mother it was, of course, you."

"Oh, Eff, I do hope it's Phil."

"You goose, who else do you think it could be?"

"Oh, you dear. Mind you scream, if I hurt you."

The embrace was, indeed, a frantic one, but Effie stood it like a Spartan.

"I don't see why you should think I have done such a clever thing," she said, as she finally stepped up to the looking-glass to attend to her ruffled curls. "When there's only one man in the world, it wants very little discrimination to pick him out."

"Only one man? That's a very poor outlook for us that are left," laughed Dulcie, but not very heartily.

Effie shrugged her shoulders. "I can't help that. One has to be selfish occasionally, just to remind oneself of one's own value."

"Still, I suppose every woman thinks she is selfish—in your way, that is—when she gains her 'only one man,'" hazarded Dulcie.

"They can console themselves with that, if they like," said Effie magnanimously. "I'm not going to trouble about other women, at least not for the present."

"Not even about me?" asked Dulcie rather piteously.

"You? You aren't a woman; you are only a child."

"Effie, I also thought I was; I hoped so, at any rate. But I have rather come to doubt it lately."

Effie scrutinized her keenly. Then she asked. "What makes you doubt it?"

"Effie," said Dulcie timidly, "you won't mind my

asking you for a certain piece of information, will you?"

"Certainly not; but I warn you I am very ignorant."

"No, no, you must know all about it there is to know. How—how did you find out you were getting fond of Phil?"

"Oh, you want to know the symptoms. I could have told you them off pat last night, but I have been hard at work all day to forget them. You see, they are rather painful. Still, the principal one was a violent sense of absent-bodiedness; my chief thought about everything I did was that he wasn't there to see me do it. I was getting to feel so incomplete that I was afraid to be alone with myself; I fancied there was only half of me—what's that you are mumbling?"

"It fits," repeated Dulcie a little more loudly. "The symptom, I mean," she added.

"What, you've been at it as well—feeling incomplete? How dared you?" exclaimed Effie, her manner fierce and threatening, but her grasp of Dulcie's hand very soothing and gentle. And then a light dawned on her. "It isn't—yes, it is—it must be that Leuw boy. Fancy, child—you and I sisters-in-law; won't it be heavenly?"

Dulcie looked at her aghast and agonized. "Effie, how can you let your tongue run away with you like that? I haven't said a word. . . ."

"Quite right, too—I should have been very much shocked if you had. Remember I am semi-qualified for playing propriety. Has he said anything, though?"

"No—yes—that is, I believe he as much as hinted."

"Did he? That's good. A hint from him, I should

say, is as valid as a written declaration from most other people. I never came across a man who reminded me so much of a strong-box with an intricate combination lock."

"And he may not have given me the right key," murmured Dulcie. "Effie, what if I have been wrong after all?"

"Yes, there is that danger," admitted Effie. "It's a very humiliating thing to say, but we'll keep it strictly to ourselves: we women aren't really half so clever as they give us credit for. I nearly made a mistake myself. But there, I'm a nice Job's comforter, am I not?"

"Less of a comforter, but more of a friend. You might have buoyed me up instead of warning me. Your own happiness did not make you lose sight of mine. But Eff—Eff—Effie. . . ."

"If you start crying, I shall simply go off into the most terrific fit of hysterics you ever saw," threatened Effie.

That averted a catastrophe, and Dulcie's handkerchief returned to its pocket.

"You mustn't let out you know about Phil and me—not even to Phil himself," enjoined Effie, putting on her gloves. "I think I can hold out for the week now all right."

"Wouldn't it be better if you annulled the condition?" asked Dulcie uneasily.

"Perhaps so; I'm sorry myself I made it. But you don't want me to make Phil think he's marrying a weather-vane?"

"No," said Dulcie dubiously.

Phil and Leuw were waiting in the hall to escort Effie home.

"I have not asked you how you got on to-day," whispered Mrs. Duveen to Phil. "I could see without."

"Hush," Phil smiled back, "I mustn't tell yet; but you may think whatever you like."

Leuw could not help overhearing their colloquy. Mysteries, mysteries everywhere; the world was full of them. But his own was the greatest of all, and its name was—Dulcie.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE fire crackled merrily in the grate, and Mrs. Diamond busily cracked nuts in the arm-chair. Mr. Diamond was going through his usual Friday evening task of reading aloud to his wife the contents of the "Jewish Examiner" from cover to cover, down to the very advertisements. Mrs. Diamond believed in getting full value for her money. Mr. Diamond's style of reading inclined to the monotonous rather than the intensely dramatic—a thing not to be wondered at in a hard-worked man, on whom, for the time being at least, the sitting-room couch exercised a much more powerful fascination than the most epoch-making of communal events. Even his wife's rousing capacity, which, in its way, was not inferior to that of a fair-sized Leyden-jar battery, had occasionally hard work to keep him from dozing off in the middle of a psychological moment. As the years had slipped on, Mr. Diamond had become a more and more devout believer in the "peace-at-any-price" policy. He had found it necessary, because the increasing length of his union with Mrs. Diamond had not resulted in a corresponding lengthening of her temper. But, though apparently he had made concession a fine art, any one catching a glimpse of his soul, would have shrunk back affrighted at the depth to which the deceptiveness of appearances could sink. For there, at the bottom of that same soul, Mr. Diamond's, to wit, an undreamt of desire had taken root, germinated, and

grown to ripeness—the desire to have things all his own way at least once during his married life. He felt that this was due, if not to himself, at least to the other members of his sex, whose claim to the lordship of creation he had done more than any other man living to undermine. Of course, he knew that, should the worst come to the worst, he would, in a way, retrieve himself at the ultimate moment of his earthly existence, when he would follow the call of the Destroying Angel instead of listening to the earnest importunities of Mrs. Diamond to keep where he was and continue to draw his salary. But the thought offered him only a hollow consolation. He preferred an earlier occasion, so that he might have time to analyze his emotions after the event.

The columns of the “Examiner” were more than usually crowded that week. Mr. Diamond had just yawned and nodded his way through the “Correspondence,” and had arrived at the “Items of the Week.” The change of ground seemed to give him an impetus, for he proceeded more briskly:

“We are authorized to state that Mr. Philip Lipcott-Duveen will contest the constituency of St. James'-in-the-East in the Radical interest at the ensuing General Election in place of Sir Saul Simmondson, who has definitely determined to retire from parliamentary life. We give a portrait and biographical sketch of Mr. Lipcott-Duveen in another column.

“The headmastership of the Tenter Street Infant Schools, vacant through the appointment of Mr. Lions to, . . . ”

A shadow fell across the page, and, looking up, Mr. Diamond saw his wife lowering down on him, and

evidently making frantic attempts at catching her breath.

"Why, what's the matter, Becky, my dear, you aren't ill?" he asked, jumping up apprehensively.

"What's that you are jabbering about headmasters and infants and lions?" she jerked out.

Mr. Diamond gave a hurried glance at the paper, and then lifted his face to hers in mild reproach.

"But it says so here, Becky; I can't read you but what it says."

"And doesn't it say just before that little Philly Lipcott that I used to send errands is going to be a Member of Parliament, and you slur it over without even stopping to make a casual remark about it? Who are you that you shouldn't be surprised at errand-boys becoming Members of Parliament?"

"Does it really say he is going to?" asked Mr. Diamond in a small voice, diving back into the paper greatly abashed; for, as may be surmised, he had been reading with his eyes and not with his brain.

But Mrs. Diamond's patience had failed her, and snatching the journal from his hands, she intimated she would rather spell herself blind than rely any further on such a monster of untrustworthiness. Mr. Diamond accepted the rebuke in a proper spirit of dejection as indicated by a hanging head and down-cast eyes.

It took Mrs. Diamond quite ten minutes before she had worked her way through the short paragraph. Then gazing into the grate, she said:

"I'm still in two minds about it, Diamond—but I rather think I'm a bit annoyed with Mrs. Duveen. After all the friendliness I have shown her, fancy her

not dropping me a line on the private, and letting me find it out through the paper, just as if I was the ordinary sort of people. Well, I'm not the one to bear malice, and by way of telling her so, Diamond, you'll drop her a note as soon as the Sabbath is over, saying that you will do her the favor of going on the Election Committee for Phil, and that you stand good for a hundred votes . . . bless my heart and liver, the man's asleep!" she wound up as a sad, long-drawn snore from Mr. Diamond revealed to her the real intent of his contrite attitude. She tip-toed over to his chair, and shook him, though by no means roughly, by the shoulder.

"Help—help—he'll gore me," shrieked Mr. Diamond, who must have been dwelling in dreams on some episode of the abattoir.

His wife assured him that she was no runaway buffalo, and that he need not regard his little fright as too severe a punishment for putting her to the trouble of saying her say all over again.

"But where am I to get a hundred votes from?" enquired Mr. Diamond dolefully when he had heard her.

"Well, you've got one, and that leaves only another ninety-nine to be got besides—doesn't it?" replied Mrs. Diamond cheerfully.

The arithmetic of the thing was certainly correct, thought Mr. Diamond. But at the same time there rose to his agonized imagination the vision of himself, fifteen stone in his alpaca coat, toiling up unending staircases, with the heat of a London dog-day humming about his ears—only to be told that he "had better come again when the old man would be at home."

Mr. Diamond did not know who had invented elections; but had it been his own father, Mr. Diamond could not have refrained from the most unsparing censure of such misguided ingenuity. Being subject to all the more common impulses, Mr. Diamond did not take his misfortunes without a murmur. But, though in nine cases out of ten he could put his finger on their source by merely stretching out his arm, he preferred to trace them back to their most remote and aboriginal cause. It was safer.

Mrs. Diamond had meanwhile been making a critical study of Phil's portrait, and was just handing the paper back to her husband with the command to read the biographical sketch, when a loud rat-tat proceeded from the street door. The matter was unusual, because as a rule they had no visitors on Friday nights.

The little maid-of-all-work had hurried down to open, while Mrs. Diamond stood listening on the landing. A sudden hope had come fluttering about her heart. Perhaps Mrs. Duveen. . . . The next instant she bounced back into the room, with a snort of disgust.

"Only Julie Preager and Sadie Tannenbaum," she snapped.

She was still clutching the "Examiner," but as though to work off her disappointment somewhat, she viciously thrust it back into the inner pocket of Mr. Diamond's overcoat, which happened to be hanging on a nail near by.

The two visitors rushed in apparently laboring under strong excitement.

"Is it true. . . ." began Mrs. Tannenbaum.

"That Dinah Lipcott's second. . . ." Mrs. Preager snatched up the question.

"Is going to be made an M. P.?" screamed Mrs. Tannenbaum, determined that the lion's share of the query should be hers.

Mrs. Diamond regarded the two with a look of ineffable caution.

"Who told you?" she asked finally.

"Why, everybody is talking about it," replied Mrs. Preager.

"So I says to Julie, 'Let's go and ask Becky—she'll know, if anybody,'" added Mrs. Tannenbaum with happy resourcefulness. She knew from bitter experience how to handle Mrs. Diamond.

The latter, however, seemed totally unimpressed by the broad tribute to her omniscience. She was shaking her head in wonder. "Strange how these things leak out," she said at last. "Well, since you know so much, my dears, I may as well tell you that it's quite true. I heard about it more than a month ago, only I had to give my word that I wouldn't breathe a syllable to anybody. By the way, Rose—that is, of course, Mrs. Duvéen, God bless her—told me there would be a portrait and a biographical sketch of Phil in this week's 'Examiner.' I wonder if Diamond . . . dear me, I never saw such a glutton for sleep; there he's off again. I wonder, I was going to say, whether he brought the paper—oh, I can't bother to look, and it would be a shame to wake him."

"What's a geographical sketch, Becky?" enquired Mrs. Tannenbaum.

"His history, of course," Mrs. Preager took upon herself to reply.

"History, indeed," sniffed Mrs. Tannenbaum; "fat lot of history he's got to go to bed with. He may be

able to kid other people, but we know that he wasn't rocked in a golden cradle, don't we?"

"I should think I did," asserted Mrs. Diamond, speaking strictly on her own behalf; "I don't know if I ever told you how. . . ."

"How you wrote the letter to the Board of Guardians," exclaimed both Mrs. Preager and Mrs. Tannenbaum in a breath, horrified at the prospect of having the story once more inflicted upon their nauseated ears.

"Well, then, don't ask me if I know anything about Philly Lipcott," said Mrs. Diamond complacently.

"I can only say I pity Dinah if she puts on any airs when I meet her," remarked Mrs. Preager acidly. "I never like to brag, but I should have to remind her that a second cousin of mine once nearly got on to the vestry."

"And it wouldn't take me long to tell her that my son-in-law, Izzy, only last week made a shooting-jacket for a duke," threatened Mrs. Tannenbaum.

Mrs. Diamond smiled to herself disdainfully, knowing how infinitely her own claims to greatness exceeded those of her cronies. Still, a sudden access of magnanimity, which she herself could not explain, made her deliberate whether or not she should "put them to rights." The quick-witted Mrs. Tannenbaum, however, snatched at the merciful respite to change the current of the conversation.

"And what's Dinah's eldest been doing since he's back?"

"Goodness only knows," replied Mrs. Diamond; "he's something in the City, Dinah told me."

"Perhaps he keeps one of those orange-and-apple stalls near the Bank," hazarded Mrs. Preager.

"What nonsense you're talking," remonstrated Mrs. Diamond. "Don't you know that Dinah buys meat a shilling a pound, and changes her curtains once a fortnight?"

But Mrs. Preager was unabashed. "Well, I dare say he'll be found out one of these days—like the rest of 'em," she hinted darkly.

It is impossible to determine into how many shreds Leuw's reputation would eventually have been rent, had it not been for another and rather imperative knock at the street door. Mrs. Diamond jumped up eagerly; perhaps her fanciful anticipation was still to come true to-night. But, though she soon convinced herself that there was no Mrs. Duveen demanding admittance downstairs, the real arrivals were in their way just as surprising.

"Well, talk of the devil, my dears," she said under her breath, as she hurried back into the room, "it's Dinah and her eldest."

"You don't think he overheard me?" whispered Mrs. Preager flutteringly to Mrs. Tannenbaum.

"You stupid woman, how could he?" was the reassuring reply.

"No, I don't really suppose he could. But you remember we used to say that boy had eyes to see through a brick wall and ears to hear the flies slide across the ceiling."

It may be assumed that Mrs. Diamond's welcome was nothing less than overpowering. Her expression of unbounded delight mingled dexterously with pained but tender rebuke to Leuw at his having ignored her—her of all people—so long.

"I admit it was very wrong of me not to have called

on you before," smiled Leuw. "But I'm doing so as soon as I can possibly manage—ah, how do you do, Mr. Diamond? I'm sorry to have disturbed you. Why, you must have drunk of the elixir of youth."

"Excuse me, I wasn't . . ." began Mr. Diamond, blinking at him indignantly. "Oh, I understand what you mean—why, to be sure, aren't you my dear young friend, Leuw Lipcott?"

The ludicrous change in his manner made everybody laugh, and relieved the situation of a not unnatural stiffness. Only once, near the beginning, Mrs. Tanenbaum could not resist the temptation of reminding Mrs. Lipcott of her antecedents. However, she took good care to assure herself first that Leuw was closely absorbed in a conversation with Mr. Diamond.

"Talking of charwomen, Dinah, I must say I have never since come across such a worker as you used to be. I'll never forget the way you shined my parlor fender the day my Cissie got engaged. Do you happen to remember what kind of polish you used?"

"Now, how do you expect me to remember that, Sadie?" asked Mrs. Lipcott, looking at her frankly. "Still, if you want a tip how to keep your home bright, you might make a note that clean hands and a good temper will do that better than any sort of polish."

And now that the ground had been finally cleared, the talk spun on merrily. As it struck ten o'clock, Leuw cast an enquiring glance at his mother, which the latter answered with a shoulder shrug. A quarter of an hour later the two of them found themselves close to one another, and Leuw took the occasion to whisper something into her ear.

"It's no use waiting any longer," she whispered back; "they'll stay as long as we stay. But I don't see why you should take any notice of them; I'm sure Mrs. Diamond won't mind."

Leuw nodded and took something from his pocket.

"Mrs. Diamond," he said, seizing on a lull, "we are all friends here, so I needn't be shy of telling you the main reason of my visit to-night. It was to bring you a little present."

He held out to her a small square casket, which Mrs. Diamond took with the hesitation of extreme astonishment.

"A present? What for?"

"You may have forgotten, Mrs. Diamond, but I haven't," answered Leuw, his voice clear and resonant. "There was once a certain poor widow and two helpless orphans and a certain kind soul—but what's the use of my going on? We all know the story. It's only a little thing, Mrs. Diamond, and it took rather a long time in coming. But I hope it will show you I have not forgotten."

Mrs. Diamond stood speechless at this development of things, and in fumbling with the casket pressed the catch which held the lid. A fine five-stoned brooch sparkled into view.

"Oh!" came simultaneously from Mrs. Preager and Mrs. Tannenbaum.

Mrs. Diamond still said nothing, but stood looking at her husband. The latter came nearer, and examined the brooch critically. But his object in doing so was not to satisfy himself that the stones were genuine. It was only to gain time. If this silence continued but half a minute longer, the great opportunity of his life



THE GREAT OPPORTUNITY OF HIS LIFE.

would ripen into consummation. And so it happened. Mr. Diamond took a deep breath; he felt upon him the spirit which must have animated the prophets of old, so that they went forth to preach to the mobs of howling heretics, not knowing at what particular moment they would be torn limb from limb. The low ceiling had arched into a vast concave dome; at least so Mr. Diamond judged from the sound of his words as he said:

"Mr. Lipcott, my wife is very much obliged to you, but she will not accept your present."

Leuw hardly grasped the momentousness of the crisis, for he said cheerfully:

"Oh, if she doesn't care for it, she can change it for something else."

Mr. Diamond's face was very white, but his words came out red hot.

"It isn't the shape that my wife objects to, it's the whole idea of the thing. You said she was good to widows and orphans. That's only what anybody whom God has given a heart even the size of an olive would do; and it's not a matter that can be paid for at all on earth. I hope it's registered all right to her credit in heaven, and she's not going to get it scratched off for the sake of a bit of glitter to tickle her eyesight with."

"Spoken like a man, Mr. Diamond," said Leuw, his hand on the other's shoulder; "and now you'll let your wife take the brooch."

"Ask her yourself," replied Mr. Diamond, his heart in his mouth.

"It's no use, Mr. Lipcott. You must take my husband's answer."

Mr. Diamond gave a jump. It was years since she had spoken of him as her husband, at least in his hearing. So after all he seemed likely to redeem his manhood before he died.

Leuw scratched his ear in perplexity, half touched, half amused.

"Then what's to become of this unfortunate ornament?" he asked.

Both Mrs. Tannenbaum and Mrs. Preager crooked instinctive fingers.

"Let me have the money it cost, and I'll distribute it for the Passover," advised Mrs. Diamond, "but only on condition that you come here and see me do it."

"I'll come, if only for the pleasure of your society," smiled Leuw. "Mrs. Diamond, I have heard you say it yourself, but that does not detract from the truth of it: there are not too many like you. Mr. Diamond, you called me your friend; I shall try to deserve that title. Good night."

Leuw and Mrs. Lipcott's departure was followed almost immediately by that of Mrs. Preager and Mrs. Tannenbaum. The room was not large enough to hold their surprise.

"Eighty guineas, if a penny," said Mrs. Preager.

"And she refused it—because Diamond told her to," added Mrs. Tannenbaum.

"Because Diamond told her! Diamond answered, when *she* was spoken to!"

"Julie, take my word for it, the world's coming to an end!" summed up Mrs. Tannenbaum.

The first thing Mrs. Diamond became aware of, as soon as the visitors had left, was that she had added a new sensation to her life: for the first time since she

was married she felt embarrassed in the presence of her husband. And what was more, she did not try to disguise the fact from herself. Mr. Diamond's state of mind was also contrary to all precedent. The flush and exhilaration of his great exploit had died away; he had returned to his workaday mood, and still he had not been overtaken by the symptoms which should have supervened in the usual course of events. But for all that he furtively hoped that Mrs. Diamond would take a sensible view of the incident.

When, however, he did hear her comment upon it, he glanced involuntarily at the couch to make sure there was no Lazarus Diamond taking his nap there.

"Diamond, you know you came near to being the death of me before?" began Mrs. Diamond.

"God forbid, Becky; how did I manage that?"

"By nearly making me explode with pride. I didn't believe my ears. 'Is that Diamond talking up like that?' I says to myself. You couldn't have done it grander if you had had the whole world to listen to you. Gracious, to see Julie and Sadie stare—it was worth a whole Regent Street jewelry shop."

"I wasn't thinking of making them stare, Becky, my dear," said Mr. Diamond quietly, "and I wasn't riding the high horse and parading myself. I talked just the way I was minded; and, thank God"—he wiped his forehead at the retrospect—"you were minded the same."

"Diamond, I'm certain I should have given in even if I hadn't been. I was too proud of you for anything else."

There was a pregnant interval, after which Mrs. Diamond resumed.

"You know what? Now that I come to think of it, there must be a lot of good points about you I haven't appreciated."

"How could I expect you to—a busy woman like you?" Mr. Diamond said to allay her pangs of conscience.

"And perhaps my temper was a trifle shorter and my tongue a trifle longer than might have been."

"Well, then, I can't complain; at least you let me have the long and the short of it."

"But from to-day it'll be different, I promise you."

"Why different, Becky? You're quite good enough for me as you are."

"Don't, or you'll make me hug you. But oh, Diamond. . . ."

"Yes, Becky, my dear?"

"If I could have worn that brooch just for five minutes before I gave it back!"

CHAPTER XXIX

It was some days later. Mr. Alexander was making his way to the Underground Railway Station to take train for St. John's Wood. He seemed in no hurry to get there. In fact, he had already missed his usual train and the one after. It was a full hour past the regulation closing time for City offices, but the streets had not yet assumed the aspect of cloistral desolation they wore on other evenings. Nevertheless, the crowds that thronged them showed uncannily lifeless—phantomlike almost; they hurried along in quick automatic jerks, their footfalls leaving no echo, their movements a concert of dull, constrained silence, through which the chorus of bawling newsboys rang with more than its customarily distressing shrillness. At every turn one was startled by the faces of men and women tense with ill-concealed anxiety or lax in a frank abandonment to wretchedness. Over all there hung an atmosphere of wreckage and catastrophe.

"How can I tell her—how can I tell her?" muttered Mr. Alexander to himself for the tenth time.

And just then a thought struck him which caused him to make a spasmodic grab at the door handle of the compartment in which he was sitting, as though he intended to jump out and outdistance the train by running.

"Good God, while I have been loitering about in my cowardice, some one may have taken the news to her already."

He had indeed a difficult task before him, as bearers of unwelcome tidings always must have; but though he had delayed it as long as possible, he had not for a moment meant to shirk it. If he could not deaden the shock utterly, he might at least do some good by catching the rebound of it on his own heart. For the remainder of the journey he consoled himself vaguely with the recollection of the telegram he had sent Phil:

"Don't fail to come up this evening. You may be wanted."

A glance at his sister, as he entered the sitting-room, told Mr. Alexander, greatly to his relief, that she knew nothing.

"You seem to have had a hard day, Bram," said Mrs. Duveen affectionately passing her hand over the furrows on his forehead.

"Not that so much. I feel a little worried."

"What, the markets bad?"

"No, there have been some disquieting rumors about, concerning the City and Southminster Bank."

"My Bank, Bram?" asked Mrs. Duveen, her voice rather unsteady. "But didn't you at once go round to Mr. Barker to enquire?" she added.

"I did. Rose, be a brave little woman. The Bank has failed."

"And I am penniless."

"Not absolutely, dear. Barker says the liquidation will leave at least three shillings in the pound. That will still. . . ."

"Oh, my poor child—my poor little Dulcie," moaned Mrs. Duveen.

"Rose, don't be unreasonable. The thing is a blow,

I admit, but you must not forget that I am your brother, and. . . .”

“Don’t scold me, Bram,” was her reply. “Just let me say or do whatever I like for the moment. I shall have plenty of time to be ashamed of it afterwards.”

And taking his consent for granted, she broke into a fit of weeping that shook her from head to foot. Mr. Alexander stepped back, and looked on helplessly, dividing his apprehensive gaze between his sister and the door. His apprehension was justified, for presently Dulcie entered, and took in the scene in agonized bewilderment.

“Dulcie, we have lost all our money; the Bank has failed,” cried Mrs. Duveen, in answer to the girl’s mutely frantic attempts to soothe her back into self-composure.

Dulcie rose to her feet with a bound, and, her hand tightly pressed to her fluttering heart, drew a piteous breath of relief.

“Is that all?” she asked, looking at Uncle Bram for corroboration. “I thought that perhaps somebody was dead.”

“Yes, that’s all,” echoed Uncle Bram, heroically calm. “I told her it was nothing to make a fuss about.”

“Make a fuss about?” cried Dulcie, back on her knees at her mother’s side. “I shouldn’t think it was. Why, mother, it’s splendid. We’ll take a three-roomed cottage in the country, and I’ll go and fetch the milk in the morning, fresh from the cow, and do the housekeeping and cooking. . . .”

“And make yourself foolish generally,” growled Uncle Bram viciously. “Rose, Dulcie, understand

one thing. There's going to be no nonsense here. Cottage, cows, cooking—ridiculous! If it were not that I wanted to save you the trouble of making out cheques on a non-existent Bank, you wouldn't have known anything at all about this, as far as I could have helped it. You both know as well as I what I was going to do with my money. Don't let us have any absurd expostulations about it. I don't suppose you would have scrupled to take it, if left to you in due course by my last will and testament. If you raise any objections now, I shall have no alternative but to beat them down by threatening to remove myself from the face of this earth forcibly and unnaturally in the flush of my youth and beauty."

"Hush, Bram," breathed Mrs. Duveen, her handkerchief still to her eyes, and her hand groping blindly for that of her brother.

"Then we shall consider it settled," said the latter, seizing it warmly. "It's no use making a secret of your loss, Rose. Everybody will know how the failure has affected you financially. But otherwise you need not answer impertinent questions, and I dare say you are strong enough to let people think what they like."

"Do you suppose I should have the slightest hesitation in letting them know who has come to our rescue—even if they did not guess?" asked Mrs. Duveen, regarding him reproachfully.

"Only you might have waited a little before rescuing us," added Dulcie, with the pretense of a pout.

"There was absolutely no reason why I should," smiled Uncle Bram.

"Yes, there was. Here we have been rich and poor

and rich again, all in the same breath. You ought to have given us a chance of getting the full benefit out of our reverse."

"Benefit?" repeated Uncle Bram, astonished.

"I mean, get the whole moral of it, grow humble and introspective and chastened in spirit, as is becoming under the circumstances. You might, at least, have given us time to look interesting as people who had 'seen better days, you know'—oh, what a horrid thing I am to make you reproaches, even in fun!"

And for further earnest of her repentance, her arms were round his neck and her face on the lapel of his coat. Mr. Alexander, patting her cheek, felt a hot trickle pass over his hand. That warned him not to pursue the subject. So he suddenly became very matter-of-fact, and launched forth on a brisk account of the causes, which, as far as he had ascertained, had led to the failure of the City and Southminster.

But though he addressed himself impartially both to mother and daughter, he had in reality only one listener. Mrs. Duveen's thoughts were elsewhere; they were with Phil. She was harping on the promise she had made him. Immediately after the momentary unreasoning alarm for the future of her child had come the realization of the predicament in which the unforeseen course of events had placed her. Dulcie was secured, but Phil was counting on the support of a broken reed. She, who had been an almoner in her own right, had become a pensioner herself. She had made no resistance to accepting help, because she knew the spirit in which she had done her own dispensing; and she also knew as intimately that her kinship with her only brother was something more

than mere affinity of blood. And so she was convinced that he regarded this opportunity of being good to those he loved as a favor to himself; had she not felt the same? She was equally certain that he would save her the ignominy of not being able to meet her self-imposed obligations. That practically disposed of the difficulty with Phil. Still, it complicated things unnecessarily, if not very formidably. Besides, there was Phil himself to be reckoned with. But she had faith in Phil; he could be easily made to see things in their proper light. It was only fair to him, however, that she should assure herself of his decision before she put the case to her brother. She looked forward to it with some impatience, but with no great disquietude.

Phil arrived just as Mr. Alexander was bringing his story to a close. He looked anxious and perturbed.

"Bread and cheese for dinner to-day—we must economize," Dulcie greeted him merrily.

Phil nodded, but evidently without entering into the spirit of the jest. "I just saw it in the paper," he said gravely. "Is it really so serious?"

"I am afraid it is—for some of the other depositors," answered Mr. Alexander. "Then apparently you didn't get my wire."

"No, I haven't been at my rooms since lunch."

"I wired to Phil to come up," explained Mr. Alexander genially, eager to prevent a recurrence of the emotional stage of the proceedings. "I can't keep it on my conscience. I wanted him to help me in the task of administering consolation—a horrible outrage on your common sense, for which my humblest apologies. I ought to have known how beautifully you

two women would take it. Not much trace of a cataclysm here, eh, Phil?"

"For the other depositors, you said," reverted Phil. "Then am I to understand that the breakdown has not affected Aunt very greatly?"

"Not in the least," replied Mr. Alexander hastily.

"I am very thankful, indeed," said Phil, looking his relief.

"Quite so," commented Mr. Alexander indefinitely. "And now please we'll quit this miserable business; we have honored it quite enough with our attention. When do you begin your campaign, Phil?"

"To-morrow evening Sir Saul will introduce me formally to the Association," replied Phil rather reluctantly. Mr. Alexander's evident desire to get away from the "miserable business" looked to him very suspicious, and renewed his previous apprehensions. He also felt a little hurt. Perhaps Mr. Alexander might have vouchsafed to him some explanation how Mrs. Duveen had succeeded in escaping the disaster which, from all accounts, had overwhelmed everybody else. However, he kept his thoughts well under control, and took his share in the conversation with as good a grace as possible, waiting his opportunity.

That came when Mrs. Duveen rose, ostensibly to pay a visit to the kitchen. There was no need of her significant manner to tell Phil that the movement was a feint. Laughingly offering his help he hurried after her.

The laugh stopped abruptly on the other side of the door.

"What is the truth about this, Aunt?" he asked almost harshly.

"Come in here," she said, drawing him quickly into the little chamber that served as her sanctum.

Phil entered, and waited for her to speak.

"You guessed rightly," she began, her voice full of deprecation; "Bram has not told you the real state of things. My fortune is gone. Bram talks of three shillings in the pound, but I don't believe him. Something altogether irretrievable must have happened to compel an important concern like the City and South-minster to declare bankrupt. For my own part and Dulcie's, the difference it makes in our position is very slight, thanks to Bram. But you know where the inconvenience of it comes in."

Phil nodded, without, however, looking at her.

Mrs. Duveen went on more warmly: "You must also know that the inconvenience exists only on the surface. I only want your permission to act, and it is removed altogether."

"You mean through Uncle Bram?"

"Yes; I am glad you don't 'shy' at the idea. Of course, at first glance it may seem a second-hand way of doing things, but that is a matter which ought to trouble me instead of you. If I have no compunction about it, you certainly ought to have none. Tell me, when shall I ask him? To-night?"

"No, no, not to-night," replied Phil with impulsive haste. "I must think it over thoroughly by myself first. Perhaps I may find my own way of circumventing the difficulty."

Mrs. Duveen looked disappointed. "At any rate, give me your assurance that you will make Bram your first fall-back—as my substitute."

"I will, I will," promised Phil, but with so patent

an air of abstraction that Mrs. Duveen might well doubt whether he had grasped the full purport of her request.

"Does Eff—I mean do the Elkins know?" he asked suddenly.

"Not so far as I am aware."

"Shall I go and tell them?"

"There is no particular reason why you should. But perhaps you still require a pretext—the week isn't up yet," smiled Mrs. Duveen; "and if she can get away, bring Effie back with you."

But Phil had only set foot in the street, when he came upon Effie hurrying towards the house.

"I know, I know," she forestalled him breathlessly. "Somebody came in and casually mentioned that the Bank had failed; and mother, guessing what it meant to Aunt Rose, sent me round to do what I could to cheer them up. She won't be able to go out herself for another day or two. Are they dreadfully upset, and does it hit them very hard?"

Phil briefly told her as much as he knew of the situation, and then they sought admission.

Mr. Alexander had certainly good cause to be gratified at the light-heartedness by which both Mrs. Duveen and Dulcie testified how thoroughly he had set their minds at rest. He had scarcely hoped for so great and so immediate a reward. It would have needed indeed a sharp eye to have detected from evidence furnished by this merry company that the shadow of a great disaster had come and gone that very day. Effie, having scribbled a re-assuring note and despatched it through Mrs. Duveen's maid, required no pressure to be induced to stay, especially as

she knew her mother well provided as to company for the evening. The one exception was Phil, and that only at the beginning. Having betrayed a wool-gathering mood by frequent "I-beg-your-pardons" on being addressed, and having got soundly rated for the same, he eventually pulled himself together to escape further comment.

So it was past ten when Effie left, escorted by Phil.

"I haven't thanked you for your note of this afternoon," she said eagerly as soon as they were outside. "It's awfully good of Sir Saul to take on himself the trouble of presenting you to the Committee; he must think a lot of you. I have been glad all day at the thought that at last you are beginning work in earnest. The idea of it grows on me hour by hour. Phil, the more I reflect on it, the more certain I become that you have a great political career before you."

"It is very kind of you to say so," he murmured.

But such as they were, the words cost him an effort she did not dream of. And yet he felt a strong impulse to go on speaking and tell her—what? Had he something to tell her? Had he already made sure of himself? Even if he had, he must make still surer. That he could only do by looking deep, deep down in his heart, but alone, with nobody near him. Besides, it was already so late to-night—there was really no hurry. . . And while he was thus haggling with himself for grace, the opportunity had passed, for presently she resumed, and with a voice that had changed from seriousness to archness:

"Phil, dear, I could tell you something that would interest you very much," she was saying.

"Everything you tell me. . . ."

"But I don't think I ought to," she interrupted the coming compliment.

"Don't do violence to yourself," he said indulgently.

"You great, big silly, don't you see I want to be worried into telling?"

He humored her instantly.

"Well, it's something about Dulcie," she resumed with affected reluctance, to keep up the appearance of compulsion. "The loss of her mother's money doesn't seem to have left any bad results on her; I hope her loss of something else won't leave any either."

"The loss of what?"

"Oh, dear, there's denseness for you. Of her heart, of course."

Phil halted in surprise. "Really? I had no notion of it."

"What, not even a notion? Oh, Phil, you are aggravating."

"Forgive me, dearest, I did not have the inclination to notice anything but you."

The loving pressure of her arm on his assured him of her contrition and gratitude.

"Who is he? Do I know him? He must be a paragon among men to deserve her," he went on, his voice rising at the last words.

"You could tell that best—that is, if you are not unduly prejudiced in his favor."

The meaning of her allusion was unmistakable. It startled and held him tongue-tied.

"Phil, dear," she pleaded, "you don't consider I have been blabbing? Because I haven't. Seeing that you are I, and I am you, and we are both each other,

or ought to be—it would have been wrong if I had kept it from you.”

“Distinctly wrong,” he comforted her smilingly. “Only I want to know—did you tell me for any purpose?”

“God forbid,” she ejaculated, horrified. “You don’t suspect Dulcie has given me a brief for her?”

“This time it ought to be my turn to scold,” he said gently, as they came to a halt outside Effie’s home, “but I generously refrain from keeping you out in the cold here. I will only say this about Dulcie and Leuw: if it is to be, they will find each other, as we have.”

“Phil, that sounds frightfully fatalistic,” she jested.

“Remember we hail from the Orient, the home of Kismet,” he explained.

She laughed merrily, but his own face remained strangely staid.

“As we have,” she harked back softly. “And to-morrow we are going to tell the whole world about it.”

“To-morrow,” he echoed. “I shall come to remind you, in case you forget.”

“It may be necessary. I had nearly forgotten the world—through you.”

He thrilled. Such a “good-night” was worth living for. And then he went home to think.

CHAPTER XXX

THAT Phil was true to his intention, and did a considerable amount of hard thinking that night was manifest the next morning from the dark circles under his eyes and a general appearance of drawn haggardness. But despite these visible vestiges of inward storm and stress, his face wore a confident serenity, which showed that the back of the conflict was broken, and that he had issued victorious. And, indeed, he felt a wonderful sense of security as he thought of what lay behind him. That day contained for him one great uncertainty; but, whichever way its balance might incline, the night had been an indubitable, inalienable achievement, in which he would find—if he had need for it—a partial compensation.

He rose early, because the morning's program was a full one. It comprised four calls, each of them momentous, and he was desirous of getting them over, because he knew that, till he had done so, his life would be a dangerous and demoralizing seesaw of emotion. Emotion, at the best, was but a luxury of the soul; he was certainly paying too heavily for his by a prolonged drain on his mind and body.

In accordance with this mood of practical economy, he gave priority to the visit which, among those on his list, could lay claim to the most business-like nature. It took him to Sir Saul Simmondson. The interview between the two men did not last long, but, short as it was, it effected its purpose decisively. It

was also encouraging. As Phil left the baronet, he called himself a fool for having anticipated difficulties and for not approaching the matter in hand with a more equable state of mind. Sir Saul had received the information Phil had brought him sympathetically, and had indeed seemed a little surprised at the agitation his visitor had displayed. Phil told himself that he ought to take advantage of the moral of the circumstance and to act accordingly.

But for all that, his heart beat considerably faster as Mrs. Elkin's house hove in sight. Still, he had a ready excuse for that; it would have been much more strange if his blood had not coursed quicker at the immediate prospect of seeing Effie. It did not even strike him as curious that, although quite fifteen hours—waking hours, most of them—had passed since he had last set eyes on her, he should now feel hardly conscious of the interval, instead of deeming it a petty eternity. It only proved to him how deeply she had entered into his being, how inseparable her entity had become from his, that time and space perished before this all-pervasiveness of hers. "You are I, and I am you." Yes, she was right. Perhaps he had only just now stumbled on the real truth why he had so long delayed asking her formally to identify her life with his.

She opened the door for him herself, and the dull, murky morning seemed suddenly to become flooded with light and fragrance.

"I have been studying your knock—wasn't it good of me?"

Then her tone veered round to dismay. "Oh, dear, from where did you get that gray face?"

"I—I slept badly," he stammered, following her into the room.

"I thought you had perhaps bad news for me—for instance, that you repented your contract," she laughed with shamefaced joyousness.

"I have news for you," he replied tremulously; "but whether it is good or bad, depends entirely on your point of view."

"I like that sort of news," was her comment; "it makes you feel as if you were the arbiter of your own destiny. Quick, let me hear."

"My candidature for the St. James' Division is canceled," he said.

Her face fell. "No, that is not good news," she said slowly. "Have they superseded you by another man?"

"No."

"Perhaps you are going to stand for another constituency instead," she hazarded eagerly.

"Neither."

A puzzled look came over her. "Then I don't understand it, Phil."

"I have withdrawn of my own accord."

"Of your own accord?" she repeated. "Nonsense, you are jesting."

"No, dear, it is true. I have just come from Sir Saul. I went to inform him that the Committee must look out for another candidate."

She seemed to hold her breath as she asked: "What made you do that?"

Phil did not answer immediately; he was annoyed with himself. He knew she would ask the question, and he had been so improvident as not to have mar-

shaled his case properly beforehand. And so he came out, floundering and at random almost, with the explanation how the financial disaster which had overtaken Mrs. Duveen had affected him also, inasmuch as it had made void her promise as to the supply of means necessary for launching him on his career.

Effie listened intently, and then laughed in the fullness of her relief.

"Is that all?" she asked. "Only a matter of money? You foolish boy, beating about the bush like that. Surely you must have known you had only to speak out, and I. . . ."

He interrupted her with a quick gesture. "No, dear," he said gently; "I thank you sincerely, but you cannot help me."

She came close to him, and stroked his hand with smiling indulgence.

"Of course, Phil, dear, you have to say so," she answered, her voice as caressing as her hand. "You men have such funny notions of pride. The way you are arguing in this case I suppose is that if Aunt Rose had advanced you this money, you could have salved your self-esteem by returning it. But you won't take it from me, because there can be no talk of borrowing or lending between"—she blushed gloriously—"between husband and wife. And so you prefer to get yourself into an *impasse*. You forget that—but there, Phil, you don't want me to show you up in all your absurdity?"

"I admit your logic," smiled Phil tenderly. "But there are other reasons, which. . . ."

She withdrew her hand, not too gently. "Whatever they may be, I don't think you ought to let them

count when you hear me begging to be allowed to smooth the way for you."

"If you would only hear them," he entreated humbly.

"I will not hear them. You should not even have asked me to. You know my wishes, and they, in my opinion, should be at least as potent as your reasons. I am not demanding more than any woman would think herself entitled to. Phil, dear, give way to me."

He shook his head, despairing, but firm. "I can't, Effie—I can't. If you will only give me two moments to explain. . . ."

She stepped away from him, tears of anger and indignation in her eyes.

"Do you know what you have done?" she exclaimed. "You have obtained my word under false pretenses. And that being so, you can hardly expect me to consider it binding."

"Oh, God, Effie, you won't go as far as that?" was his cry of alarm.

"I should go further if I could," she replied relentlessly. "You have deserved nothing better. You came to me with a certain thing, as though it were necessary to offer me a bait, a bribe, and when you had got me to merge my ambition in yours, because I was unselfish enough to bask in your light rather than shine in my own, you come again and calmly propose to throw it all overboard—for other reasons."

Her scorn seared him till he winced, but she vainly waited for him to speak.

"Very good, then," she went on icily; "it appears you fall in with my suggestion. I am glad you do it so readily. Nothing has been lost through—through

the false position in which we have been placed during the past few days. Nobody will or need know—my condition of a week's silence must have been an inspiration; it may also console you to learn that my agreement with the agent still holds good—I had simply forgotten to acquaint him with the change in my intentions. I am sure you will wish me success; at any rate you would have done so a week ago, and there is nothing to prevent us from taking up the thread of our relations where we left them then."

"You had led me to believe that you loved me for myself," he said, with wide gaps between his words.

"And I should never have made you think otherwise," she replied.

"No, because you have done so already," he cried vehemently.

She turned on him a dispassionate look of enquiry.

"You have done so already," he reiterated, trying to keep up his vehemence, but failing utterly. "I was dear to you only in so far as I was to you the embodiment of our joint ambitions. And now that I have frankly told you that I cannot bring them to issue in a certain province of which you approve, I have become valueless in your eyes. What else am I to think?"

"If you can't give me a little more chivalry, you might at least give me better reasoning," she said with quiet dignity. "Tell me, of whose making is this breach? You want me to believe that my love is to you the dearest thing in the world, and yet, the very first occasion on which I put it to the test, you show me clearly that it has no power beside your pride or obstinacy. . . ."

"Or something else," he interrupted bitterly. "You see, you might have known, but you preferred to gag me into silence. Well, it doesn't matter. After all, if you did not credit me with being sufficiently sane as not to have come to my resolution without rational and legitimate cause, I could hardly hope to convince you of the same by the most minute and elaborate of explanations."

Her face softened, and she came a little nearer.

"Your complaint is just, and I was wrong," she said. "Come, Phil, I have made a concession—do as much. Look, I shall make it still easier for you. I will not ask it as a right, but as a privilege."

"Then you insist on my. . . ."

"Insist? No, haven't I just told you? I entreat—I implore."

She could read the heart-break and misery in his face, but his gesture of refusal was equally unmistakable. She moved away again.

"Very good," she clinched the argument, continuing almost playfully: "No, please, don't look so sad. This is really a matter for mutual congratulation. We have come to a timely understanding. Not everybody is so lucky."

He stood still, turned to go, and then faced her again helplessly. His lips moved for a second or two before they shaped sound.

"You—you will let me wish you success before I go?"

"Oh, on my musical career?"

"I may be of some use to you," he went on importantly, for he knew it was not what he really wanted to say, and yet he could not help it, he felt so barren

of thought. "Yes, I may be useful to you. I have several influential critics among my acquaintances. One can't get too much encouragement to begin with."

"Thank you, thank you," she said quickly; "it's very good of you to think of it. And it's still better of you to show your readiness to fall in with my suggestion of before, and take up the thread where we left it a week ago."

Despite the bluntness which had fallen upon his senses, Phil could not help noting the curious intonations of her last sentence. Plainly she invited him to controvert, repudiate, protest against the consequence implied in her own offer—held out to him a strong handle for overture, even compromise. He did not know whether to derive balm or an increase of agony from this indication that she, too, could not bear the wrench without flinching. But instead of adding to his confusion, it only warned him that he must redouble his hold on himself. And as he could not possibly do that without straining himself dead, he had but one alternative—flight. With a spasmodic handshake, to which she responded mechanically, and a murmured "good-by," to which she made no answer at all, he walked from the room. Outside at the gate he glanced back, and saw her at the window, her gaze following him smilingly. He turned away quickly and hurried on. He had had a narrow escape; had he looked an instant longer. . . .

A minute or two later he was making his third call. Mrs. Duveen, the maid told him, had gone out an hour ago with Miss Dulcie, and had not left word when they would be back. Phil presumed they had

run down to the City, in order to hear further particulars of the bank smash at first hand. He knew they would hear nothing to gratify them, for the morning paper he had glanced at in the train had stated that the worst apprehensions concerning the calamity were more than justified. Phil had no patience to wait, and yet he felt unwilling to leave without having effected his purpose. Till he had disposed of this thing completely, he dared not consider himself a free man. So he surmounted the difficulty by stepping into the library and penning a note to Mrs. Duveen.

He did not begin immediately, for he had to wait till the blur had passed away from before his sight, and his hand had regained its requisite steadiness. He had become conscious all at once that here he had reached the sanctuary of privacy, having escaped the hounding glare of the inquisitive streets; and he need have no shame before himself. But he refrained. Sudden extremes were dangerous, and the fall from the heights of heroism—the word was no exaggeration—to the depths of abject weakness, would mean a disarrangement of nerve and mental fibre not easily reparable. So he forced his thoughts into working trim, and started his letter by informing Mrs. Duveen how he proposed to extricate her from the quandary in which she had hinted she had been placed by her inability to come up to her undertaking.

“I have informed Sir Saul,” he went on; “I told him that, at the very outset of my professional career, I could not afford to trifle with my chances of success by dividing my energies between building up a practice and attending to my parliamentary responsibilities—that, at any rate, the latter might inadvertently

suffer, and I dared not run the risk of failing in my duty to the constituency. He accepted my explanation as valid. To you, however, I must allow a deeper insight into the machinery of my motives. That you will be surprised, I fully anticipate; I was myself somewhat, to tell the truth. If you remember I pledged myself to make use, financially, of no help but yours in setting out on my political career, yours or none at all. At the time I gave you the assurance I had as little presentiment as you of the contrariness ahead. But it was the first thought that struck my mind, with veritable sledge-hammer force, when I heard the news yesterday. From the first moment I saw in it something more than an annoying *contretemps*—I saw in it the finger of Providence outstretched visibly, and indicating to me that the path on which I was about to enter was not my destined walk of life. It also turned my gaze back to things I had left at my rear—but on that I feel no call to expatiate in this note. What will appear to you strange, as it did to me, is that I should bend the knee to this almost primitive sort of fatalism. But I have satisfied myself on the point, and feel confident I shall satisfy you when you hear me.”

He paused a little and bit his pen. The word “fatalism” reminded him of Effie’s jesting allusion to it the night before. He had explained it away by an ethnological commonplace. But it startled him even now to think how close to the truth she had come. For the nonce he had considered it, not as the natural inference to be drawn from his remark, but as a phenomenal instance of intuition, second sight almost. Why had she not exercised that power to-day? Why had she not interpreted him more truly herself, since

she had refused him permission to be his own interpreter? Why. . . . But he pulled himself up short; once he commenced to ask questions, he might not know where to stop. He might end by concurring with the people who said that all life was a riddle, incapable of solution. He had always refused to believe it. Nothing could be more pernicious, more paralyzing than this doctrine of the vanity of human endeavor. Action was but the spirit of enquiry materialized; and he did not want to be brought to a halt before the dead wall of blank impossibility. He had many things to do—and he would do them.

He brought his letter to a close, practically adding nothing save the assurance that this decision of his was final, and a request that she should accept it as such. He put the note into an envelope, and handed it to the maid to deliver to Mrs. Duveen immediately on her return. Then he sallied out once more to pay his fourth and last call that morning. He anticipated it eagerly; for this time his was a more grateful errand. He went not to take away, to dispossess, but to restore, to make amends. He could look forward to sympathy, to open arms. And how sorely he needed them! His whole being was nothing but a bruise, a weariness, an aching rebound.

He found Leuw in his outer office.

"Have you five minutes for me?" Phil asked him.

"Certainly," replied Leuw, taking him by the arm and stepping with him into his private room.

"This is a sad business, isn't it?" he said, closing the door behind them.

"What is?" asked Phil quickly.

"The City and Southminster. I met Mr. Alexander

this morning, and he stopped to ask whether I was at all involved. I was glad to be able to say I was not. He and I are apparently the only two people who can say that. And then he told me about poor Mrs. Duveen."

Phil made no comment, but stood, with his back to Leuw, staring moodily into the grate. Leuw watched him thus for a little time; then with a quiet smile he pulled out his cheque book, and put his signature to one of the blank forms.

"Do you mind coming here a moment, Phil?" he called.

Phil obeyed, slowly stepping up to the writing-desk.

"Oblige me by filling that in," continued Leuw, holding out to him his pen; "but please don't make it more than seven figures," he cautioned him with a laugh.

"What is this for?" asked Phil, staring at the paper slip.

"For anything you require. We need not go into details."

Phil looked at him keenly, and then pushed the cheque back to him.

"Thank you, very much, but I really have no use for it."

"Nonsense, Phil; you must have. You told me you have, at present, no fixed income. And now that you have no longer Mrs. Duveen to rely on—remember your election is approaching."

Phil shook his head. It struck him if every sinner were to have so many stumbling-blocks placed in the path of his repentance, the occasions for joy in heaven would be few and far between.

"Leuw," he said at last resolutely, "there will be no election—for me. I have withdrawn." And then, without giving his brother time to voice his astonishment, he proceeded: "I know I have done everything I could do to forfeit your confidence. But if you will give me a chance of retrieving myself, I promise you will not again be disappointed. Take me back, Leuw; let us work together at the task that was to be ours."

"The Scheme, you mean?" exclaimed Leuw, starting up.

"The Scheme," repeated Phil solemnly. "Leuw, I feel like a man who has awakened from a trance, in which he has been doing the will of another—and has done ill things. I have treated you very badly, Leuw, so badly that you might well look on my very apology as an insult."

"But I had no notion of this—the change is so sudden," said Leuw bewildered.

"It had to be sudden or not at all," replied Phil. "Perhaps my conscience would, sooner or later, have got tickled into life; but that is problematic. What it wanted was a downright upheaval, to shake it to its very foundations. And, thank God, it has had it."

And with bated breath he told Leuw, using almost the same words as in his note to Mrs. Duveen, what it was that had influenced him so powerfully.

"I don't suppose I shall be able to convince one man out of a hundred that this does not smack of rank superstition," he went on with a short laugh; "but what does it matter that the medicine was not according to prescription, so long as the patient is cured? Oh, what an inconsistent fool I have been! I railed in all the bitterness of my heart against those of us

whose self-interest counseled them to seek the wider scope and the more glittering rewards of the outer world, instead of following the secret call they must all have felt at one time or another to set in order the things that were awry in the community. I was angry with them because they did not perceive and snatch at the opportunity of doing their duty to their country—by doing their duty to their brethren. And now I have become myself my most flagrant instance in point. Leuw, do you think I can ever again set any store on my judgment of right and wrong?"

Leuw's face had taken to itself a troubled look, but he spoke soothingly.

"You are too severe on yourself, Phil. Listen to me. You know I welcome you back with all my heart and soul. If, half an hour ago, anybody had asked me for my dearest wish—at least, one of them"—his voice fell at the last words—"it would have been your return to the camp. But what you have just said opens to me another aspect of the question. It is true, as you say, that the great majority of us would best serve our fellow-citizens by serving our fellow-Jews. Still, there are, no doubt, some few of us, of whom our country can make use in a more direct fashion, especially in the vocation which has been offered to you. Remember our race has already given England one man to whom she owes at least something of her greatness."

"And you think I may turn out to be another?" broke in Phil, with an incredulous smile.

"Who knows?" returned Leuw soberly. "You certainly have given proof that you may aspire to anything."

"No, Leuw, not so high as all that," said Phil. "To begin with, it is against the chances of probability. Our having had a Beaconsfield as recently as a generation ago is almost conclusive that there will not be a second for a very long time yet, if at all. History repeats itself in events—rarely in individuals. For another thing, Leuw, it would be against the spirit of the race. Our race is prodigal in towering talent, but it is chary in real master minds. We are in the habit of accounting for that by pointing to the hostile circumstances which have, for so many centuries, cramped and hampered our development. But I think the true cause is something more radical, more fundamental. It is an astonishing manifestation of the wise economy wherewith the race of the Covenant husbands its vitality. Instead of exhausting its resources in the production of genius, it prefers to consummate itself more frugally in brilliant mediocrity. It could only be by the exercise of millennial effort that nature created a fixed star; her meteors and nebulae are but the pastime of her idle moments. The spirit of the race, feeling that, unlike Nature's, its energies were finite, could not afford to indulge in the luxury of fixed stars; it remembered that there was an interminable line of posterity to provide for, and that the penalty of over-exertion was ultimate degeneracy and effeteness."

He paused and looked at Leuw, who smiled back at him as he said:

"Your theory is attractive, like all things that appeal to the fancy rather than to the understanding."

"Fancy is instinct, and understanding is second thought; the former is more often correct than the latter," replied Phil dogmatically. "But, however that

may be, it will not prevent me from following my theory into its most important side issue. We have never appreciated how beneficially this economy of capacity has reacted on our conditions of life through every period since our dispersion. We might almost call it our good angel. What if we had possessed more fixed stars—more geniuses? We should have added fuel to the blaze of odium which was scorching us. Had more of our heads touched the clouds, we should only have elicited the lightning more frequently. Our greatest danger, perhaps, has been our pre-eminence; we have been constantly too much in the world's forefront. It has brought us a grudged and doled-out glory, but it has brought us no happiness. Let us lay the moral of it to heart and that in its widest application. Let us see what a change of policy will do for us. Suppose we cultivate a habit of self-effacement. Not the self-effacement implied in an absorption into our surroundings—our case is not so desperate that we must resort to racial suicide; neither that, nor a skulking obscurity, which might be construed into a shirking of the duties that must come to us in the natural order of things. But there surely must be much virtue in a dignified, self-contained, self-contented aloofness. We may find it difficult to accustom ourselves to it, but what should help us is our belief that we are yet to be the protagonists on the spiritual stage of the world; and meantime let us quietly make ourselves word- and heart-perfect in our parts."

Leuw listened eagerly; where had he heard this before? Ah, he recollected. He had had the gist of it from Yellow Joe the other evening. His nerves

tingled. So the thoughts of the broken-down drudge and the finished man of culture ran in one and the same channel. They were, indeed, brothers, the people of the Covenant. He rose and laid his hand on Phil's shoulder.

"Phil, we must give that first place in our curriculum," he said.

"No," replied Phil instantly, "the first place must belong to the old, old stock maxim of the common or garden moralist, the supremacy of duty over self. I shall teach that myself; I happen to know the subject rather well."

Leuw looked at him in unspoken wonder, but Phil bore the scrutiny without a tremor. Leuw's voice was not very steady as he said:

"I hope you will take no offense—but perhaps there is a duty which, to my knowledge at least, you have not yet fulfilled."

"And that is?"

"Dulcie. You have a great opportunity of paying off to her what you owe to her mother. I know her uncle is providing for her, but probably she would prefer being dependent on one whose support she could claim as a matter of right. This"—he pointed to the open cheque—"is still at your disposal. You need only make it serve you till you have established the practice which, with your connection, ought not to take you long. Don't think me officious."

"I am to ask her to marry me?" exclaimed Phil, nearly off his feet with surprise. "What makes you say that?"

"You talked of duty," replied Leuw dully.

Phil smiled—a wan smile. "Thank you, Leuw, for

being jealous of my honor. But I can assure you that it is not involved here."

"Why not?" asked Leuw, though he felt the ineptness of the question.

"For the simplest reason in the world, she does not expect it of me."

"There is some one else?" exclaimed Leuw.

"Yes, there is. There is. . . ."

"You," Phil had been about to say, but he stopped short. He no longer owned the secret; he had no right to it. Effie had taken it back with everything else, her love, his happiness; he gulped down a silent sob.

Leuw had struggled for, and had obtained, mastery over himself. So he had come too late after all. His doubts, his hopes, his self-delusions had come to a tame and ignominious end. He ought to have known it, known it the moment Phil returned to his allegiance. That was a miracle, and no man dared expect that his life had room for more than one such. Well, then, he would make the most of the one that had been vouchsafed to him; he would hug it to himself tightly, nurse it tenderly; it had to act as deputy to him for everything else life had henceforth to offer.

He gripped his brother's hand till the latter winced; but it was nothing to the grip that held his own soul as he said:

"So, then, Phil, there is nothing but you and me—and the Scheme."

CHAPTER XXXI

"It's quite a month since he was here last, and he used to call at least once a week," Mrs. Duveen was saying, knitting her brows. "I wonder if we have done anything to offend him."

"You are an obstinate woman," replied Mr. Alexander rudely. "Pray, why shouldn't you take his word? I told you I met him some days ago, and he told me he was extremely busy. You know that he and Phil are going to start the Institute very shortly in temporary premises, and I can well understand that that makes heavy claims on his time."

"I mentioned the chance of his being offended, because you said that, when you taxed him with staying away so long, he appeared awkward and ill at ease," continued Mrs. Duveen. "Very possibly he was having something at the back of his mind. . . ."

"So has every hawker; much more so a man who keeps twenty clerks going," interrupted Mr. Alexander dryly. "Rose, I wish you wouldn't be so conceited as to think that because a man doesn't overrun you, you have given him a whole bundle of grievances to carry about. You don't understand these things. When a man says he's busy, it doesn't mean he is keeping his nose to the grindstone all day and all night; it means he hasn't an ounce of energy left to take him to or through anything else."

"Still, an hour once in a way," persisted Mrs. Duveen. Then her voice dropped. "Bram, perhaps he does not feel quite in his element here any more."

"I don't understand exactly what you mean, Rose."

"Well, when a young man has been living for eight years in a wilderness, and comes back to the temptations of a place like London . . ."

Mr. Alexander leaned forward, and assuming a mysterious look, whispered to her: "You have hit the nail on the head, Rose; he is going to the bad as fast as the devil has time to drive him."

"Oh, Bram, it isn't really true?"

"I beg your pardon, my dear; I am afraid I startled you rather badly," returned Mr. Alexander, laughing penitently. "But you know you really deserved some punishment. What made you suggest anything so absurd? You have seen enough of Leuw Lipcott to feel sure that he would not go off his balance whatever the provocation. It distresses me to see you commit such errors of judgment at your time of life."

"I am very glad it was an error," said Mrs. Duveen, with evident relief. "It was because I had got to like him so much that it gave me such a shock; and then I was thinking of his mother. Still, you will perhaps admit that the young men nowadays are not exactly plain sailing. I fancied I had made a pretty close study of Phil, but I wish I knew what construction to put on him of late," she added suppressing a sigh.

"He has been a little mysterious—there's no denying it," said Mr. Alexander, very soberly. "Of course, he has tried to disguise it as well as he could, but one can't get away from the fact that he has taken to paying us duty calls, Rose. He doesn't seem at home here—nor anywhere else either, for the matter of that. He has got the look of a man who finds the world a very narrow place to be in."

"I am certain it is Effie," rejoined Mrs. Duveen. "You remember what I told you about the two some weeks ago."

"Well, then, why doesn't he run down to Eastbourne to see her instead of mooning about here in this absurd fashion?"

"That is what puzzles me so much, Bram. There seemed to be some fanciful arrangement about not making the engagement public for some days. And then came that bank affair which, although I tried hard not to show it, left me for the time being unfit to deal with anything but the most elementary facts of life. It was only after Effie had taken her mother to the seaside that it suddenly came home to me there had been no definite announcement."

"I certainly have heard nothing official about it," said Mr. Alexander, shaking his head grimly. "But I don't see the point of your standing on ceremony like that. Why didn't you ask Phil right out?"

"The mere fact of my having to ask was proof that he had nothing to tell, or that he did not want to; and to tax him would have embarrassed me much more than him."

"A very sensible explanation," nodded Mr. Alexander; "I wish you would always be so careful about your feelings. Still, that does not help us over the stile. Perhaps, though, there may be a chance of finding out from Effie herself. I understand she will be back to-morrow or the day after."

"I shouldn't like to try it," said Mrs. Duveen hastily; "it would be like striking matches to find your way in a powder magazine. The only plan, I am afraid, is to keep quiet and watch developments. But it is very disagreeable all the same."

"Most awkwardly disagreeable," corroborated her brother.

And then he followed Mrs. Duveen's example, and made a close investigation of the pattern of the carpet. After a full minute's silence he continued:

"And now that we have got each other into such a magnificent moping fit, we may as well make the most of our opportunity. Rose, Dulcie is going distinctly off color."

"What, has it struck you too?" came her anxious query.

"H'm. It appears, then, we have each been waiting for the other to mention it," Mr. Alexander replied fiercely. "Rose, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves—no, we oughtn't; it will only waste more time. We must take instant action to make up for our gross and culpable negligence."

"By all means. I shall take her to see Dr. Black to-morrow."

"You will do nothing of the sort. We are not going to frighten her into fancying there is something the matter with her. There isn't; take my word for it, although I haven't a dozen letters after my name. A little change, a little lifting out of the groove is all she wants; and what's more, she is going to have it."

"You mean, Bram . . ."

"I mean we'll go aroaming for six months or so. Do you think she will object?"

"I don't know. She won't quite like the idea of leaving her Girls' Club and the 'Happy Evenings' so long."

"Won't she?" asked Mr. Alexander, bristling. "We'll see about that. Once we have got her under

weigh she is at our mercy. You see, I am not consulting your pleasure in the matter at all, because you will have to come along anyhow. We'll get it over at once. Where is she?"

"Upstairs. I shall send for her," said Mrs. Duveen readily.

"I notice she always has to be sent for now," grumbled her brother, continuing in the strain till Dulcie appeared on the scene.

It was patent at a glance that the solicitude of the two older people was not altogether without foundation. Dulcie's eyes looked heavy, and the outline of her face showed a distinct approach to angles. Her manner, too, had undergone a change; it had lost its old spontaneous vivacity, and the tutored alertness which had taken its place was a poor substitute.

"You wanted me," she said, her glance roving uncertainly from her mother to her uncle, and back again. "Now, please, Uncle Bram—no lectures; you look like it," she added, smiling at him feebly.

"Oh, dear, no," replied the latter hastily; "it's something else altogether, though your expecting a scolding is strong evidence of a guilty conscience. We only want to ask you to be good enough to pack up your trunks and hold yourself ready for marching orders. You see," he continued, forestalling her enquiry, "I have always understood that there are a few things worth looking at outside this estimable country of ours, and I have at last made up my mind to go and see for myself. Besides, I really want a decent holiday. So does your mother; she has just confessed to me that a recent disagreeable event has had considerably more effect on her nerves than either

of us guessed. Of course, you yourself are right as a trivet, but I know you won't be so unkind as to let us two oldsters maunder along deaf and dumb through the Continental Babel."

"I shall come, if you want me to; when do we start?" asked Dulcie.

Mr. Alexander collapsed. Under cover of his specious misrepresentations, he was girding up his loins for a tough tussle. But this unlooked-for evaporating of the opposition gave him an unpleasant sensation of being foiled and fooled—so much so that he nearly betrayed the true state of things as, ignoring her question, he growled at his niece:

"You don't quite seem transported with delight at the idea!"

"I confess, I am not particularly keen on it at present, but, as they say, the appetite comes in eating," replied Dulcie with a half-hearted smile.

"It will only be the worse for you if it doesn't," said Mr. Alexander formidably. "Well, Rose, when can you be ready—to-morrow, or the day after?"

"What are you thinking of, Bram?" remonstrated Mrs. Duveen indignantly. "You must give us a week at least."

Mr. Alexander chafed at the delay, and said so. Mrs. Duveen insisted, and the discussion became tolerably animated. But despite appeals from both sides, Dulcie refused to become entangled in the altercation. It was only when she grew conscious how strange her indifference must appear that she interfered at all.

"Well, you can tell me afterwards what decision you have come to; in any case, I shall only have a few

days to arrange for somebody to look after the Club, and I must write at once."

"Oh, by the way," exclaimed Mrs. Duveen, as Dulcie was leaving the room, "while you are writing, you may as well drop a note to as many of our friends as you can to tell them we are leaving. We shan't have any time for 'p. p. c.' visits. There is one especially I don't want you to forget—Phil's brother."

"Your mother has got an idea into her head that we have somehow given offense to him," explained Mr. Alexander. "Do you happen to be able to account for his long absence?"

Dulcie stared at him wide-eyed, as though frightened, and then breathing a "No" went slowly out. Arrived at her room she told herself that the reason why Uncle Bram's question had taken her aback was because it was the one she had asked herself persistently for the past three weeks; and she feared that with those keen, shrewd eyes of his he had read it in her face. That would be, indeed, terrible. She did not mind wrestling with her perplexity in solitude and silence, but to know somebody at the peephole, though that somebody be her nearest and dearest, would rob her of all her strength; and what would happen then she could not tell, and the mystery of it terrified her.

And now, once more, and for the hundredth time—why did he not come? For the hundredth time also she passed in review the incidents of their last meeting to see if it contained anything whereat he might reasonably have taken umbrage; and for the hundredth time she had to declare herself guiltless. On the contrary, as far as she could remember, it had seemed the

beginning of a finer understanding between them, a subtler sympathy, which made itself felt not in what they said, but in what they left unsaid. And then this summary, inexplicable halt, just at the moment when a few more steps seemed all that was necessary to . . . That, indeed, was the only possible interpretation which had suggested itself to her: he had noticed he was going too far, and he had pulled himself up in time. But the next instant she recoiled at the idea of setting him down for a futile, irresponsible trifler. No, far sooner she would take the blame on herself. It was she who had mistaken the situation, and had put the wrong value on his visits. Her overtures it had been which had led to their compact of mutual confidence. He had met her half-considered advances with good-humored complacence, but had reserved himself the choice of continuing or growing tired as he pleased. Evidently he had chosen the latter, and now—and now she was paying the penalty of her imprudence. It was a heavy penalty. She recollected how she had consulted Effie, whom she had deemed wise in the ways of love; if she had waited but a little longer, there would have been no need for her to seek another's counsel and pay in return an extravagant fee—the confession of her secret. For by now she had acquired very great wisdom of her own, and knew the meaning of the strange antics which her heart was playing. She knew who and what was responsible for her restlessness and discontent, for the loneliness and sense of void, which seemed to have become her inalienable portion. A huge gap divided her from the affairs of life, from the things that were most desirable. If she had at all lacked

proof, she had received it just now, when she had listened with callous apathy to the offer of gratifying the ardent wish of so many years—of seeing with her own eyes the manifold wonders of distant lands. She argued her own utter nervelessness in that she was too unstrung merely to feign the gladness she did not feel. Well, though she could not make of her travels a joy for their own sake, she must see that they should at least not go altogether purposeless. They should be to her the quest after the peace of mind she had lost; they should be a tonic, stringing tight the lax sinews of her soul, so that when she came back she should be ready to take up her life anew—a stronger, more forceful, more valuable life, such as can only be lived by those who have purged themselves of the great besetting weakness, which, more than the sum total of all its other flaws, makes humanity the slave and knave of circumstances.

She would have preferred not to see Leuw again before her departure from London; but for obvious reasons she could not refuse to obey her mother's injunction. And on the other hand, perhaps, it was better she should not shun this final trial. It was just as well that she should take accurate measure of the hold he had gained on her, and so impress on herself indelibly the necessity of sterilizing his influence before she would step again into the sphere of its scope. And besides, another pang or two—what did it matter? And she sat down to pen the note with a self-possession which tricked her into an exultant belief that the crisis lay already behind her. But presently she knew better, for she had almost lost count of the number of drafts she had made, before she was satis-

fied that neither wording nor penmanship gave token that they had cost her a single tremor of heart or hand.

And, indeed, when the letter reached Leuw the next day, he saw in it nothing but a politely worded, neatly written intimation that Mrs. Duveen would be glad if he would take an opportunity within the next few days of coming to wish them God-speed on their expedition. The writer of the note said nothing as to whether she endorsed the invitation; though Leuw perused it at least a dozen times, there was not a syllable which might even distantly be construed into such an endorsement. Finally, as though to set the seal on his ill success, he called himself a fool for his pains. But he did not get rid of his annoyance with that. It increased as he harked back to his receipt of the missive, and he remembered how the first sight of the handwriting on the envelope had sent the blood furiously to his head, only to set him presently shivering as though with ague. And that after weeks—at least so the world reckoned it—of laboriously nursed indifference to everything but the most immediate facts of life and an over-ears immersion in the whirlpool of the day's bustle and business. Just one little touch, and here he was astir again to the insidious memories to which he was beginning to think himself deaf and blind and blunt; just one faint echo, and the old undertone of his soul, which he had done his best to tread, frighten, strangle into silence, boomed out again loud in full,sonorous responsiveness.

He leaned back in his chair, staring before him in sullen helplessness. No doubt he was a clever man of business, but he was a miserable bungler so far as

the economy of his heart was concerned. He had made a decided failure of that. All these years he had heaped and hoarded his love, refusing to expend a single grain of it, because he had hoped one day to bestow it where any man might have been proud to bestow it. And now, what was he going to do with it, with the dead weight, the refuse, unmarketable stock, to which it had turned and which was pressing him to earth? But no; he must not talk like that. It was rank irreverence against the idol he had reared on a pedestal so high that at times he felt doubtful where his earthly creed ended and his divine belief began. And that being so, it was impossible that his deal should be altogether bad. There must be some virtue in it after all. Probably it required only a little wise manipulation to convert what at first appeared to him an irredeemable loss into a considerable profit. Well, he would try. Because a thing was not a vaulting board, he need not make of it a millstone; and the love he bore Dulcie, and always would bear her, was yet to take upon itself its rightful function as the mainspring of his life. He owed it to his self-respect not to be insincere to himself; and yet, what had become of his resolution that he would be satisfied with her friendship, should—should other things fail? In the light of his conduct during the past month it must seem nothing short of a piece of puerile bravado. He knew he could count on her friendship, however much her heart might belong to the “some one else.” He would recoup himself with that. He would make it a strong factor for good, an impetus to tenser earnestness and greater endeavor—it should become the censor, nay, the guardian of his

every word and thought and act. So he would rehabilitate his credit with himself. The letter he had just received had, indeed, come opportunely; a little later, and it might have found him too perverse to listen to the pleadings of his higher interests.

It was in this spirit of recantation that he made his call on Mrs. Duveen that same evening, soon after his office hours, having vainly urged Phil to accompany him. Phil's excuse was a headache; Leuw remarked to himself that Phil had of late become strangely subject to headaches. Probably it was the reaction after the hard work he had gone through previous to his examination.

As Leuw entered the sitting-room, he found there nobody but Mrs. Duveen. She rose to meet him smilingly.

"Perhaps you think your prompt response will atone for your long desertion of us," she said. "If you do, you expect from us a simply angelic power of forbearance."

He stood looking at her, but not with any uncertainty what to reply. It would be more than despicable to prevaricate to this sweet, frank soul, which seemed to take all men for evangelists and all life for gospel.

"The way you say that is already much more than I could expect," he answered her quietly. "Apologies would be a poor return for it. So here is the truth. I had a reason for staying away. Some day, though it may be years hence, I shall tell you what it was."

"That is charming and honest of you," she rejoined pleasantly, although her face clouded somewhat. "Are

you sure, however, that this same reason does not apply still?"

"The reason still applies, but it has lost most of its force," was his guarded reply.

And then by tacit consent the subject was eschewed, and the conversation fell naturally on the contemplated tour abroad. Not very long afterwards Mr. Alexander came in, made a jesting reference or two to Leuw's re-appearance, and, in accordance with long-standing custom, enquired immediately for Dulcie. Mrs. Duveen informed him that Effie had wired that afternoon the time of her arrival, and that Dulcie had gone to the station to meet her.

"I expect her in, though, every moment; I suppose she is helping Effie to unpack. You see, she has to put Effie under an obligation; we shall want plenty of help next week," added Mrs. Duveen, with a smile at Leuw, which the latter returned, but not over-successfully. "By the way, I hope she will persuade the two of them to come round here for dinner."

A quarter of an hour later Mrs. Duveen's hope was gratified by the appearance of Dulcie, accompanied by Mrs. Elkin and Effie. There were effusive greetings between the older people, in the midst of which Dulcie came up to Leuw, and proffered her hand. Nothing but a commonplace salutation passed between them. She gave no spoken hint that his presence was anything out of the ordinary course of events, or that it called for any special comment. But had Leuw not been occupied too greatly with his own feelings, he could not have helped noticing that on the face of it there was something studied in this indifference, and that at the very least it could be construed into pique.

As it was, his thoughts chiefly concentrated themselves on wondering whether an African tan of eight years standing was strong enough to mask his sudden ebb of color. Mr. Alexander's importunate call to table rescued them from what threatened to be an awkward silence. Leuw saw nothing strange in it that Dulcie should forestall a recurrence of the predicament by giving him Mrs. Elkin for neighbor. Why, indeed, should she discomfort herself by directing her words to him, when doubtless her thoughts were far and distant, with that mysterious "some one else?" He harped almost vindictively on the phrase, forgetting that it was one of his own coining.

However, the conversation over, dinner showed no trace of the emotional cross-currents agitating at least two components of the little gathering. For one thing, there was no lack of material. Effie was fluent and amusing enough in her account of their Eastbourne experiences. She seemed to have recovered her usual high spirits, discounting the impression only by an occasional hardness about the mouth, which found its counterpart in some harsh and bitter speech. Mr. Alexander was full of the projected tour, and entered with great gusto into the details of his arrangements, in the forethought and thoroughness of which he evinced evident self-satisfaction. And Leuw, instead of feeling, as he had fully expected, that he was passing through an ordeal, found himself presently taking an intelligent interest in the proceedings, and eventually even followed them with a sort of wary enjoyment. It was only when his eyes lighted on Dulcie that the graver issues of the occasion came upon him, and made him wince at the prospect of

bleak, dreary days still to be battled through. He had so far not made up his mind whether he should ask Dulcie in so many words for what he required of her, or whether he should allow her to guess from the mere fact of his presence that he was bent on resuming their old amicable relations. He preferred the latter; the former alternative was so much more difficult. He might submit his request clumsily, and would let her see that he knew more about the affairs of her inmost heart than he had a right to know; and by making her angry, he might foil his own ends. Still he would see how events shaped; the evening was young yet.

Dinner had come to a close, but Mr. Alexander was still in full swing; and being loath to interrupt himself, he asked and obtained leave for himself and Leuw to smoke their cigars in the dining-room. Effie's attention, however, seemed to have become exhausted, for a minute or two later she slipped away over to the window, drew back the hangings and gazed out.

"Dulcie, come here and look," she called presently.

Dulcie obeyed readily, and almost simultaneously Leuw gave way to the impulse which lifted him up, and followed her.

"May I look, too?" he asked with jesting humility.

The two girls silently made room for him in the window niche. It was, indeed, a sight to hold the eye and the tongue captive. The grand, spacious garden lay bathed in moonlight down to its uttermost verge. Its trees and hedgerows stood out delicately against a background of silver; they had doffed the air of stubborn sullenness they had worn all the winter, and now seemed softening back into the joy of life at the

first presage of the spring. Over it all hung a gracious stillness, a penetrating peace, which was as a message of good-will and reconciliation to Mother Earth and all the multitudinous progeny that was hers.

Dulcie was the first to speak, but she did it in a whisper:

"Oh, I can't stand here just looking at it—I must feel it. Come, Effie."

"I should like to, but remember I have had four hours of train to-day." Then with a quick afterthought: "Perhaps you, Mr. Lipcott . . ."

"I was just about to offer myself," interposed Leuw, trying to hide his eagerness beneath a tone of measured courtesy.

Dulcie answered him with a swift look of distrust.

"But only on condition that you make yourself thoroughly air-tight," he went on with a smile. "You see, I shall be responsible for you to your mother."

Mrs. Duveen readily gave her assent, only adding her own admonition to Leuw's, and the two went out into the hall, where Dulcie wrapped herself up securely, and from there into the open.

They were nearly half-way down the sidewalk before either spoke.

"There is no danger of our damaging the chrysanthemums to-night," said Leuw, half aloud.

"What, do you remember that?" she asked, in pleased surprise.

"Certainly; why shouldn't I?"

"It's such a little thing, and so long ago," she explained, not without some confusion.

"Yes, very long ago," he confirmed pensively.

"Would you like to change back?" she asked, more lightly.

"It would be no use to me. I think I was as old then as I am now."

"You ought to be glad that you can say that. If eight years made no difference to you, it means you will never be really old."

"It might mean that I was never really young," was his retort.

"Yes, probably your construction is the right one—at least you ought to know best. And to tell the truth, you always did give me the impression that you were born with your world ready-made. You seem to have accepted the people and things that entered into it afterwards with a sort of silent protest."

His breath came short at the unconscious irony of her words. His world complete and fulfilled? His world was a void, a chaos, into which he was dying to drag her with pæans of thanksgiving, for without her it would never know the blessings of light and order. And he dared not even tell her so.

"Did you think it worth your while to make such a close study of me?" he asked turning on her suddenly.

"But I didn't make a study of you. I wasn't so presumptuous. What I said just now, I must have learned by a flash of inspiration. And now, please, it's your turn."

"My turn? For what?"

"For saying something nice to me. I made out that you were an unfathomable mystery, everybody likes to be told that. So you owe me a compliment in return. Do let us keep up the game."

He paused. Neither the manner nor the matter of her remark struck him pleasurably. It was more

than mere flippancy; it was—as far as he had cognizance of these things—a distinct attempt at coquetry. At first he only thought how inconsistent with her true self that was; but then it came home to him that, knowing what he knew, he ought to construe it into a direct offense against himself. Perhaps she was only practicing on him for the benefit of the “some one else.” And his displeased surprise veered round to downright irritation.

“Well, haven’t you thought of anything to say yet?” she prompted him with a laugh.

“I don’t think the game is worthy of you,” he replied brusquely.

“Why, now you have said it without wanting to,” she pointed out to him, essaying to repeat her laugh, but getting no further than a faint echo of it. “However, I will take your hint.”

Her ready deference to his mood made him instantly repentant.

“I suppose you are looking forward to your tour with great pleasure,” he said, very gently.

“It must be very pleasant to see new sights—you probably can speak to that from your own experience,” was the evasive reply.

“And you, of course, will have the additional advantage of taking your family circle along with you, so you will have no occasion for homesickness,” he went on rapidly. “By the way, will there be anybody besides the three of you?”

“No. I thought you understood that,” she replied, not without some surprise.

“I mean, perhaps somebody is coming to join you later on the road.”

Her surprise grew. "I don't know who would take the trouble. Why, what makes you think that?"

"I really don't know," he answered in confusion. "I had an idea that you might have made some such arrangement, especially as I gather that your tour might be a rather extended one."

He walked on a little faster, as though to get away from the sensation of shame which had come upon him suddenly. He felt like a man who has narrowly escaped being detected in some shabby device. Ever since he had been led to assume that she was lost to him, he had not been sensible of any curiosity as to whose great good fortune it had been to have found her. Once or twice he had in an idle sort of wonder gone through the list of the men whom he had met at the house. He had to admit that there was not a single one to whom Dulcie's bearing—and he had watched her very closely—had been anything more than either coldly courteous, or good-naturedly tolerant. Perhaps he had missed him on his visits, perhaps it was somebody out of town—he had frequently heard names mentioned in terms that denoted long-standing acquaintance—names, which to him, however, were nothing but names. They had concerned him but little till just before, when the jealous impulse seized him mightily if momentarily, and drove him, as it were, into laying a snare for her. He was thankful he had failed; the failure was the only thing to redeem him.

"This is the spot," he heard her say the next instant.

He caught her meaning in a flash. "Where we became castaways, and had to wait for relief," he supplemented, quite soberly.

"In a way it ought to be historic," she said with a laugh of embarrassment.

This time he did not follow her so readily. "Do you mean because of the extract from ancient history Phil treated us to at the time?"

Her mirth became more genuine. "I never thought of that. No"—her voice hung with grave and sustained emphasis on the monosyllable—"was it not here that we vowed eternal friendship?"

He turned on her with eager scrutiny. What, more flippancy, more . . .? But no, she was serious, quite serious. He could be absolutely certain of it; the moonlight told him no untruth.

"Yes, we did, we did," was his quick reply.

"And how—it will seem a strange question to you—how do you think we kept our vow?"

"I shall only speak for myself. I know I always have kept it, and, come what may, always shall keep it."

He felt cowed and yet exhilarated at the coincidence which played so strangely into his hands.

But she shook her head slowly. "No, I can't agree with you—as to the past, at any rate"—came from her deliberately. "Do you know, Mr. Lipcott, I have a good right to be angry with you?"

"Angry with me?" he repeated.

"Yes," she said. "During the first few weeks after your return, at the time when we really came into each other's cognizance, you led me to believe that you considered my help, however indirect, would be of some avail to you. And then, after buoying me up with the hope, after fanning my aspirations into flame, you change your mind. Do you think that was fair?"

He understood her at once, but surprise kept him silent.

"I felt the humiliation of it deeply," she went on, more animated. "The only conclusion I could draw was that you did not think me fit to be anything more than an intelligent listener to the planning of the work, who, when it got beyond that, was to be set aside as a mere encumbrance. If, at least, you had told me so frankly, it would have been less galling than to be left to find it out for myself—by being so completely ignored. I am aware, from purely outside sources, that your Scheme will come into operation very shortly. I know you have acquired the temporary premises in which your Institute is to make its bow to the world, and that you have nearly completed all your final arrangements. But of the inner workings I know nothing. I tried to probe Phil whenever I had the occasion. His answers were mere make-shifts; the upshot of them was a kind of 'Don't bother; everything will be all right.' And that when I thought myself entitled, from your assurances, to be allowed behind the scenes, to be allowed to watch. . . . But there; what does it matter? Please say you don't think my remonstrances unreasonable; try and make allowances for me. People like you, whose lives day in, day out, are nothing but action, and again action, can hardly understand the—what shall I call it?—the work-hunger of those condemned to comparative dronehood."

He was still wrestling with his thoughts, his words; and before he quite knew he had mastered either, he answered.

"Yes, you ought to be angry. I broke my word.

and what is more, I did it consciously—I knew it all the time. What I did not know, what I never came near to dreaming, was that you would lay it to heart a hundredth part as much as you seem to have done. But I shall also tell you this, that you did not lose by it a hundredth part of what I did. Beyond that I can give you no explanation.”

“I don’t require any, not in the least,” she broke in hastily; “I shall be content if, having acknowledged your—your breach of faith, you will do your best to redeem it. I do so much want to have my share in the work. I am afraid that if I don’t take my place before the start, others will step in, and there will be no room for me. That is—I admit it frankly—what robs our intended tour of half its pleasure for me. And then there is another point—it may strike you as a piece of feminine vanity. You made me rise ever so high in my own estimation when you told me what good you thought it possible for me to achieve. I don’t want to think that you had gone back on that opinion; I want to—well, to rehabilitate myself. And the only way you can do that is to give me your promise of the place you once said I could fill.”

“Then you really care what I think of you?” he asked eagerly.

“Will you promise?” was the counter-question that glanced off his own.

“Yes,” he replied, manifestly disappointed.

“But don’t flatter yourself that I shall take your mere word for it, especially as you are making the promise under pressure,” she continued almost gaily. “This spot”—they were still standing among the

chrysanthemums—"is propitious for making compacts; at least we have already made one here; let us make our second here as well. Don't be afraid; I am not going to exact from you a heavy guarantee. Only this."

Smilingly she held out her hand to him. He took it and held it, second after second, as though he had absolutely forgotten to let it go; she did not remind him. So they stood, looking at each other without a word. A few minutes ago the distance of space between them had been as miles; and now it was dwindling down to its proper span, a span of inches. All at once the grip of his fingers tightened frantically on hers; the inches lessened. And presently they were close together, each feeling the magnetic current from the other's heart, and gathering into themselves with tingling gladness the mutual message it conveyed to them. That was all. The fence and foil of circumstance, the parry of cross-purposes that had used them so cruelly, it all availed nothing. Phil's Kismet was brilliantly vindicated. It had been destined, and they had found each other. The chrysanthemums nodded very wisely as their whisper went round among them: "We knew it all along, ever since that time, eight years ago."

"I have so many things to say, so much to ask, so much to wonder at," he breathed into her ear.

"So have I," she replied, with something like a sob; "but not now. We have plenty of time before us."

"Plenty of time?" he repeated exultantly. "Of course, we have; my life is only just beginning."

"And so is mine," she added; "but still, we must

not forget all about the other people we knew before we lived."

"Yes, the other people. Come, we'll go and tell them."

And so they went, still holding each other by the hand, along the garden walk, up the terrace steps, through the hall, into the room—all the way hand-in-hand, like two playmate children, who, after their little quarrel, have once more returned to good accord.

Mrs. Duveen and Mrs. Elkin were sitting at a game of cribbage, with Mr. Alexander close by, giving both impartially advice. But not being so engrossed as the players, he was the first to look up as the two entered. His look grew to a stare.

"What on earth have you young ones been up to?" he cried. "Look, Rose!"

But Mrs. Duveen was too late, for the next instant Dulcie, having wound herself loose, was hiding her face on her mother's shoulder. Leuw followed more leisurely, trying to bear his happiness meekly.

"You wanted to know why I stayed away so long," he said, catching Mrs. Duveen's eagerly questioning eyes; "here is the reason: it's just kissing you. May I have it for good—mother?"

"I am so glad, so glad," was the shape her consent took, while Mr. Alexander, with greater control of his speech, blessed himself and "well-I-nevered" as he had never done in his life.

"Where is Effie?" asked Dulcie, lifting her head suddenly, to look round.

"I thought she went out to join you in the garden," said Mrs. Elkin.

"I must go and find her," said Dulcie, asking



"AND HAPPENED TO LOOK THROUGH THE WINDOW AT THE
WRONG TIME."

Leuw's permission with a glance; "she will never forgive me if I don't . . ."

And with that she was out in the hall speeding up the stairs to her own room. As she stepped in, Effie came towards her, and kissed her with quiet lovingness as she said:

"I hope you will be very happy, Dulse, dear."

"How do you know?" gasped the latter.

"Don't think I was spying. I couldn't stand the talk downstairs, it made my head burst; and I should break your piano if I sat down to it. So I came up here, and happened to look through the window at the wrong time."

There was a pause. "Well, Effie, are we going to be sisters-in-law?" queried Dulcie finally.

"No, dear; that is all done with," answered Effie setting her lips tightly.

"But why—why?" insisted Dulcie miserably. "How much longer is this wretched misunderstanding between you two to last? Effie, you just said you hoped I would be happy. How can you expect me to be when you put me on the rack like this?"

"You are quite right," said Effie pensively; "I dare not refuse you anything to-night. I shall tell you what there is to tell; but it won't make you happier."

"At any rate I shall not have to grope in the dark any longer; and that will be something."

"You are wrong about the misunderstanding," said Effie resolutely; "there is none—absolutely none. Both he and I know exactly what drove us apart; we thought and fought it out on a fair field. There was his parliamentary career. He knew how I had set my heart on it; he gave it up, presumably to have his

hands free for that old idiosyncrasy of his—the Scheme. I gave him his choice, and, like a sensible man, he took it. That is all.”

“Of course, he gave you his reasons,” said Dulcie quickly.

Effie shrugged her shoulders. “He wanted to; I would not listen.”

“Would not listen? Why not? That is the least he could claim.”

“It seemed to me impossible he could have any strong enough. And then I was afraid he would talk me over with—with plausibilities, which would convince me on the surface, and yet leave the sting of my first dissatisfaction deep down in my heart.”

“In that case, you were certainly wise,” said Dulcie speciously. “But still, I thought as a mere matter of curiosity. . . .”

“I would have given half my life to know,” interrupted Effie.

“Shall I tell you?”

“How can you know?” asked Effie with the very faintest tinge of scorn.

“I know—because I know Phil,” said Dulcie undaunted. “Do you remember how the old song puts it: ‘I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not honor more’! That will give you the keynote to his conduct. When it came to a tug of war between conscience and love, conscience pulled stronger, but the victory was really with love.”

“Yes, quite so,” came bitterly from Effie; “there you have it. Honor, conscience, and all the paraphernalia of the sophist.”

Dulcie smiled patiently. “Tell me, Effie, would

you have been content to know that things went on smoothly between you, only because Phil did not have the courage to acknowledge himself a renegade? Would it not have made you feel like an accomplice?"

"Renegade? That is a very strong word."

"It is the word he used himself. Could you suggest any other? He had taken on himself a sacred obligation. You may dub it an idiosyncrasy, but you must admit he has a right to his own view. And you should not have stood in his way when the call came to him to redeem himself. I can understand your setting him the choice as a test, and then feeling glad and proud that his decision went against you. Doesn't it strike you he has done what not one man in a thousand could do?"

"Yes, but I can put several constructions on that," returned Effie gloomily.

"Put on the best, then," begged Dulcie. "Believe that what he did was the best for the two of you. He went back to this first duty of his with his eyes wide open. He would not put on you the indignity of becoming wife to a man who had turned his back on the great principle of his life; and as for himself—well, how could he do justice to your love, with his self-reproach continually taunting him into secret discontent? Effie, you must give in."

"If there is to be any giving in, why must it come from me?" cried Effie with a last effort of rebelling.

"So as to convince yourself that he is stronger than you," replied Dulcie firmly. "Effie, there are millions of women in the world who would bless their fate for the privilege of being able to yield, for knowing that the man they are coupled to is not a reed nor

a weakling, that he has strength enough and wisdom enough for the two of them, so that they can merge their destiny blindly, confidently in his. Effie, you would lose half your faith in him, if you found it was he who had bridged the gulf instead of you."

Effie looked at her with a glance which Dulcie felt going through and through. Then Effie said slowly:

"Dulcie, I can only say this—you are a wonder. How you can argue like that, when all the time your heart is soaring sky-high, is unearthly. But for all that, don't flatter yourself. It is not your arguments that tell with me; it is yourself; it is the knowledge of your happiness, and the knowledge that I could be as happy—if I liked."

"If you can be, then it is a sin that you are not," replied Dulcie with glowing cheeks. "If you can be, I tell you, throw everything else to the wind—your doubts, your pride, your chances of the fame you aspire to. The exchange is worth it."

"You dear, passionate, little silly," cried Effie, catching her in her arms; "do you think you are telling me news? Why, I knew all that; I had tasted it, digested it, long before you had an inkling you would ever do likewise. But I am grateful to you for all that. I wanted somebody to make me the pace; I should have died of chagrin and jealousy to see you so happy, while I . . ."

Gently she pushed Dulcie from her, and commenced to fumble in the folds of her dress, producing from there presently a neat little paper scroll. She unrolled it hastily, and without another glance at it, deliberately tore it through the middle.

"Oh, what is that?" cried Dulcie a little frightened.

"Only my agreement with the agent. I had to carry it about with me while we were away. Phil will know what I mean when he sees it like this. Quick, an envelope. I am not going to waste another minute."

"Don't you think you might write him just a word besides?" asked Dulcie, as she saw Effie proceeding to fasten it up.

Effie looked at her dubiously. "Ought I?" she reflected aloud. "Well, I suppose I had better. You have been engineering this business right through, so I must follow your advice."

She sat down and scribbled a few words.

"Stamp?" asked Dulcie.

"No, I don't think I shall want one," replied Effie, putting the missive into her pocket. "And now please come down—there's no more mischief left for you to do up here."

Two or three friends had dropped in during their absence, and Dulcie became very busy gathering in her harvest of congratulations. Leuw stood close by her side—a smiling Cerberus. However, he did not stay very late.

"I want to go and tell mother," he whispered to her.

"And I want to go and make certain it isn't a dream," she whispered back; "but to-morrow, very early, yes?"

"To-morrow, very early," he affirmed solemnly.

They were standing in the hall, when Effie came gliding up to them.

"I beg pardon for interrupting," she said meekly; "but will you see your brother yet to-night?"

"Yes, I intended to drop in on him for a moment," said Leuw.

"Then do you mind giving him this?" she continued, handing him the envelope. "But you must not forget—it is very particular."

"Yes, very particular," testified Dulcie.

And then, on Effie's withdrawal, her lips shyly but without shrinking testified to something else.

Leuw stepped out into the night, which to him was transfigured into a glamour and radiance incomparable to the brightest sunrise he had ever known. He hailed an opportunely passing cab, with a shout that gave the driver some trouble in bringing his horse to a standstill, and arrived at Rupert Street before he had felt the motion of the wheels.

The streak of light through the chinks of the shutter told him that Phil was in. He knocked and entered. Phil rose from the perusing of the ponderous law volume before him, and faced his brother with a look of half-hearted enquiry. His face showed pitifully drawn and haggard beneath the lamplight.

"What is it, Leuw?" he asked, with some little show of interest. "You haven't come here for nothing."

"No, I haven't," acquiesced Leuw, successfully keeping his features under control. "I came to tell you of an important discovery I made to-night. Phil, I love Dulcie."

"Well?" asked Phil, this time with genuine eagerness.

"A month ago you told me there was some one else."

"That need not prevent your trying."

"What is the use—when she has made her choice of the other man?"

"Who said so?" cried Phil vehemently.

"You did."

Phil's lips moved, but when he eventually spoke, it was clear his words were other than those dictated by his first impulse.

"Leuw, I implore you—try."

Leuw shook his head with a pretense of despairing obstinacy.

"By the way—I am to give you this," he said.

Phil took the little packet, which bore no superscription, with nonchalant indifference. He opened it negligently, drew out the torn agreement, and looked at it, dazed and vacantly. Again and again he looked, and still did not understand. So Dulcie's suggestion was a happy one after all; it saved him quite a minute of doubt—such a minute, as might have made a difference to any man's sanity. But the accompanying message said clearly enough:

"I prefer breaking this to breaking my heart. Come."

But despite the sudden impact of gladdening certainty, which almost made more havoc of him than his previous bewilderment, his first thought was for his brother. His half-share in Dulcie's secret had come back to him, just when the need for it was most imminent; and, of course, he could do with it what he liked.

"Leuw, the some one else is yourself—I swear it," he cried exultantly.

Leuw gripped the outstretched hand in both of his, as he replied, mischief and triumph blending in his voice:

"Phil, Phil, aren't you ashamed to let yourself get hoaxed like this? Didn't you see I knew? Forgive the little joke."

"Forgive? I will do more than that: I will laugh with you. Well, what are we waiting for? Let's go and take mother the finest present she ever had—two daughters at one time. Leuw, isn't this the best of all the best possible worlds?"

.

It stands to reason that the projected journey abroad was unceremoniously hustled out of its place in the catalogue of immediate events. Neither Mrs. Duveen nor Mr. Alexander was particularly grieved at not having to exchange the secure comforts of their home-life for the doubtful amenities of Continental wear and tear. Besides, their main object had been already brilliantly achieved—a thing which Dulcie lost no time to make plain to them. The topic which occupied most attention was the forthcoming semi-formal opening of the provisional premises of the Institute. Leuw and Phil had decided to make it an almost private function, so as to prevent anything in the nature of an anti-climax, when the permanent Foundation would come to be inaugurated. The Scheme had already secured a number of influential well-wishers, and its propaganda promised hopefully for the future.

It was on the day appointed for the opening that Leuw called for Dulcie at an early hour of the forenoon.

"I want you to come and be introduced to a very great friend of mine, dearest," he said.

"With pleasure, but don't you think it a rather unorthodox time for paying a visit?" she asked.

"Oh, he won't mind; he is at home at any hour of the day," smiled Leuw.

"We must go by train; he lives some little way out into the country," he informed her, as they stepped out.

An hour later they got out at the suburban station, and presently had left behind them the last of the small cluster of private residences adjoining it.

"We are nearly there, dear," said Leuw re-assuringly.

Dulcie looked about her in wonder. "Why, I don't see any houses—and here is a cemetery."

"That is where my friend lives," said Leuw solemnly.

She clutched him by the arm eagerly. "Oh, I know whom you mean, dear—the old man I have once or twice heard vaguely mentioned, the one who loved you so much and was so good to you."

"The same," affirmed Leuw gravely. "And he was good to me. Without him, perhaps, there would have been no success in life for me, no Scheme—no Dulcie."

"Don't say that," she pleaded, clinging to him more closely. "It makes me tremble to think that it was all an accident. It wasn't, Leuw. Give him all the credit that is his due. But I am certain that even if the opportunity had not been thrust on you, as it were, you would somehow have managed to snatch it for yourself, and everything would have been just as it is."

"I see, you want to keep your good opinion of me, and not have my genius belittled," jested Leuw, smile-

ing at her tenderly. "Well, I am willing to make a compromise; let us put it down to capacity judiciously tempered with luck. I don't think any man, whether of our race or any other, who has made some headway, will pretend to anything more. And I certainly see no reason to doubt the luck," he added, the tenderness of his smile deepening as he looked at her.

They had reached the grave, detached from the rest by the foot-high parapet of rail surrounding it. There was a trim, neat look about it, which told Leuw that the ground-keeper had conscientiously earned the yearly stipend he had allowed him. On the headstone gleamed the inscription: "Christopher Donaldson. Unforgettable," as fresh and bright as if it had been lettered there but yesterday. Slowly and reverently Dulcie placed the bunch of daffodils she carried on the grave.

"How glad he must feel that he is not forgotten," she whispered.

Leuw said nothing, but as he took her hand, the thoughts which had stirred him so mightily at Christopher's funeral service came back to him with the full volume and weight of their inner truth. Who knew but that their presence at this lonely grave had brought nearer, by one infinitesimal step, the grace and good accord between man and man, which would rival the imperishable mercy vouchsafed by heaven to earth ever since the time of the very oldest of God's covenants?

THE END

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